

# *Guidelines for Gifted Programming Volume II: Planning Handbook*

*The State of North Dakota  
Department of Public Instruction*

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1992



# **Guidelines for Gifted Programming- Volume II: Planning Handbook**

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## **Abstract**

Chapter 1 of this handbook provides an overview of the rationale and goals for gifted programming, and establishes the context for this Volume within the overall Guidelines for Gifted Programming. Chapter 2 an overview of the six planning stages; each stage will be discussed in the following Chapters. After working with the material in this Volume you will be able to:

- A. Form effective committees, with effective leadership.
- B. Establish a working community for planning for gifted programming, which involves stimulating awareness among school personnel and the public.
- C. Identify benefits of effective planning.
- D. Run an effective meeting.
- E. Maintain accurate information.
- F. Balance continuity and coordination with autonomy.
- G. Encourage quality, innovation, and continuous improvement.

## CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW, RATIONALE, AND GOALS

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This Handbook represents Volume II of North Dakota's Guidelines for Gifted Programming. *This Volume is specifically concerned with the planning process, and with providing specific resources to support effective planning at the District or school level.* Chapter 2 provides an overview of the planning stages. Each subsequent Chapter deals with one step of the planning process.

Volume I presented a contemporary, inclusive approach to programming for giftedness. In preparation for working in Volume II, we will begin by reviewing the basic goals and commitments associated with such an approach. *If you are not familiar with Volume I, or are not familiar with current approaches to gifted programming, you should begin by working with Volume I.* Our perspective departs substantially from traditional views of gifted programs ("let's decide which students belong in this category, what tests to use to find them, and what to do with them after we've categorized them..."). Thus it is important to begin by addressing the nature of, and rationale for, **gifted programming**.

Some precise grammarians may object to the use of the phrase, "gifted programming", arguing in the strictest usage that programming is neither "gifted" nor "ungifted". In part, we have used the phrase as a simple matter of convenience, to insure that it is understood that the scope of these guidelines extends beyond a narrowly-conceived entity called "the gifted program." In a stronger sense it may be accurate, and not too idealistic or simplistic, to urge a concern for "gifted" programming- a vision of education as an experience through which the strongest potentials and talents, of everyone involved in it, are honored and cultivated. The phrase "gifted programming," at the very least, is more economical or efficient than repeating each time the full message we hope the phrase will convey: *all of the efforts made by a school and community to recognize and nurture the many and varied strengths, talents, and sustained interests of many students.*

Gifted programming in North Dakota should be viewed as a commitment to create, support, and sustain many services through which educators seek, bring out, and nurture the strengths, talents, sustained interests, and best potentials of our students. The goals and purposes of gifted programming should therefore be considered more broadly (and, we believe, more powerfully) than merely to select and label a single, fixed group of students to be assigned to a single, fixed program. These Guidelines do not merely concern "having a gifted program" in your District or school, as much as they address the dynamic and on-going process of challenging many students to become aware of their best potentials, and to fulfill those potentials as fully as possible through the opportunities and services offered throughout the school program.

Given this broad inclusive view of gifted programming, it is important also to clarify and strengthen the relationship between planning for gifted programming and the overall process of school improvement planning. A school's commitment to both short and long range planning should certainly include consideration of deliberate efforts to recognize and nurture the strengths and talents of all students and staff. It is both procedurally efficient and conceptually appropriate, to approach gifted programming and school improvement as coordinated efforts.

### ***An Important Note!***

These Guidelines are about constructive programming, and they are concerned with innovation, improvement, growth, and change – not criticism. If your school or District is already involved in gifted education, we hope the guidelines will affirm many of your present commitments and practices, and provide direction for future growth. If your school or District is *not* presently involved in gifted programming, we hope the Guidelines will give you constructive direction and incentives for beginning such efforts.

## **Rationale and Goals for Gifted Education**

Modern educators recognize that the expectations and demands made of today's schools are greater and more important than ever before in our history. As the complexity of our world increases, as the rate of change with which we must cope increases constantly, and as our children and youth face more and more difficult personal, career, and social challenges than any previous generation, the demands on education also increase. We realize today, more than ever, not only that knowledge, but talent, imagination, problem solving, and judgement are qualities far too important in the world of the present and the future to be wasted or unfulfilled. We recognize the need for talented accomplishments in many areas that will be essential to progress, to the quality of life, and perhaps to survival, and we recognize that schools share in the responsibility for nurturing many and varied dimensions of giftedness, including, for example:

- Science, medicine, technology, and engineering, to find solutions to problems of hunger, disease, and the destruction of our living environment;
- Leadership, social and behavioral sciences, and organizations, to solve the problems of justice, equality, diversity, and governance;
- Arts, culture, and entertainment, to bring us new opportunities and to enhance and celebrate creative expressions that add joy and meaning to life;
- Ethical and moral principles and philosophical analysis, to guide individuals and groups in understanding and dealing effectively with the most complex concepts and challenges of human existence;
- Personal fulfillment, enabling individuals to live in greater mental, emotional, and physical health and to celebrate their own talents as well as those of others.

We may not be sanguine about our ability to assess and select those young people who display the greatest potential for significant accomplishments in these areas, or in any other specific talent dimensions. In truth, these accomplishments often unfold over many years in an individual's life. They are the products of many complex factors over and beyond one's specific experiences in school. Nonetheless, educators today are rightfully called upon to make every possible effort to discern students' special needs, interests, and potentials, and to provide educational opportunities for their nurture. Increasingly we must deal, then, with the responsibility of serving as important "guardians of the future."

Several major goals can be stated for a contemporary approach to gifted education; these include the need to:

- Promote deliberate and systematic efforts in schools to seek, respond to, and enhance the development of the strengths, talents, and sustained interests of students and staff;
- Support schools' efforts to establish and maintain a culture that values, promotes, and rewards excellence;
- Guide schools in their efforts to create, support, and enhance a climate conducive to innovation and the recognition and development of talents, among their students and staff;
- Stimulate and support on-going efforts by schools to recognize individuality and to promote higher levels of thinking, learning, and productivity among students and staff, and to encourage independent, responsible self-direction;
- Foster on-going professional development to enable educators to expand their ability to recognize and nurture students' strengths and talents;
- Support and enhance effective use of community resources to expand learning opportunities and enrichment for all students;
- Encourage all staff members to be aware of the academic, personal, social, and emotional characteristics and needs associated with giftedness, and to support their efforts to respond positively and effectively to such needs when observed among any of their students;
- Encourage on-going dialogue and actions in schools that will lead to ambitious visions of their goals and mission and promote their attainment.

### **Fundamental Tenets and Beliefs**

The development of guidelines for effective programming has been influenced by a number of underlying principles and beliefs, based on contemporary theory and research from several areas of study, including gifted education, cognitive and developmental psychology, educational administration, curriculum and instruction, and other related areas. These principles provide a foundation on which effective school practice can, and should, be based. Exemplary programming for giftedness is the result of careful planning and on-going review and analysis. It does not come about by chance. The District level structure, leading to a detailed Master Plan for Gifted Programming, should reflect and embody the fundamental tenets and expectations presented on the following pages.

**There should be evidence that:**

**A systematic planning process occurs, involving-**

- Careful and thorough self-study, leading to a specific written plan for recognizing and responding to students' needs.
- Commitment and support for adequate professional time for the planning process to occur, and recognition of the need for an importance of gradual implementation over several years.
- Instructional staff, administrative staff, and Board members demonstrate commitment to support the planning process.
- Planning for gifted programming is a professional concern which involves a cross-section of staff (e.g., elementary and secondary; varied content areas; curriculum and special areas;

instructional and administrative) in the planning process. Provisions are also made for parent and community input and participation.

- The plan reflects contemporary theory and research regarding expanding views of giftedness and talents and effective practices in identification and programming.
- Purposes and goals are clearly-stated, emphasizing commitment to meeting the identified needs of all students.

### **Identification efforts are based on contemporary theory and research, emphasizing that-**

- Commitment will be made to identification that is flexible and inclusive, not fixed and exclusive.
- Encouragement and support will be provided for all staff to search deliberately (individually and cooperatively) for the strengths, talents, and sustained special interests of many students.
- Identification of students' needs and programming responses are clearly linked, not treated as isolated concerns.
- Identification stresses recognition of students' unique characteristics and related instructional needs, rather than arbitrary procedures emphasizing fixed percentages, cutoff scores, or funding issues.
- The uniqueness of developmental levels and school organizational patterns is respected and balanced with the need for continuity and comparability across ages or school units.

### **Programming is comprehensive and multi-dimensional, including-**

- Commitment exists to integration, rather than isolation, among various components of the school's program, with involvement and participation by many staff members, working toward the goal of effective integration among **all** components.
- Programming options support and extend, expand, or enhance, rather than supplant, the regular program.
- Staff members share ownership and responsibility for effective programming in their own areas of expertise, and support actively the school's efforts to meet students' unique needs through curriculum modification, enrichment, acceleration, and other appropriate services.
- Programming deals with the ways students learn best, and with responding to their identified educational needs; it will not be used as a "reward," nor will its denial be used as a threat of punishment, for any student.
- Routine procedures and requirements can be modified (perhaps even set aside) when legally possible, to insure that meeting students' unique needs is a high priority for the school.
- Commitment exists to providing many and varied services – within and beyond the regular school program – to respond to the diverse needs of many students.

### **Effective implementation will actually occur in practice, evidenced by-**

- Explicit provisions are made on-going professional development for all staff members, consistent with principles of adult learning and effective leadership.
- An appropriate timeline for implementation has been adopted.

- Explicit provisions are made for ongoing program monitoring and evaluation.
- In the District's written plan, goals and objectives are clearly linked with: a) identification; b) programming policies; c) program evaluation provisions.
- Systematic steps are taken to build commitment and support for effective programming by the instructional staff, administration, school board, and community.
- Documented activities and services are provided in each school.

This Handbook, and its companion volumes, are intended to provide *guidelines* – practical, helpful resources – rather than to define a mandate or a prescriptive set of policy requirements. Guidelines are general recommendations to help those who follow them to chart their course more accurately, efficiently, and effectively. Guidelines can also serve many purposes; for example guidelines **can**:

- Identify major areas in which decisions should be made;
- Describe significant dimensions of the “foundation” for effective programming;
- Challenge schools to reexamine existing procedures and practice in the light of contemporary theory and research;
- Encourage schools to conceptualize and define programming constructively;
- Highlight possible areas of concern or omission in local planning efforts;
- Identify important questions that must be addressed and potentially valuable resources for dealing with those questions;
- Inspire schools to investigate challenging new directions and opportunities;
- Stimulate and encourage innovation and progress;
- Encourage and support comprehensive planning for school improvement;
- Offer a foundation for continuity and comparability of general practices from one school to another.

Guidelines for gifted programming **do not**:

- Mandate specific actions, decisions, or models;
- Impose on any school a specific set of methods and materials;
- Require the use of specific identification instruments or procedures;
- Limit or constrain the services which can be offered or the students for whom such services are provided by individual schools.

While the intent of the Guidelines is to provide assistance and resources to facilitate planning and implementation of gifted programming throughout the state, this Handbook and its companion Volumes are not intended to comprise a comprehensive textbook on gifted education. They will not take the place of careful study of the literature, nor are they intended to eliminate the need for the services of trained professionals at the local level.

Although we have attempted to provide sufficient explanation and discussion of major topics, many specific concepts and resources from the literature of gifted education and school improvement will be summarized without detailed descriptions or complete discussion; reference citations are provided for follow-up study.

## CHAPTER 2: OVERVIEW OF SIX PLANNING STAGES

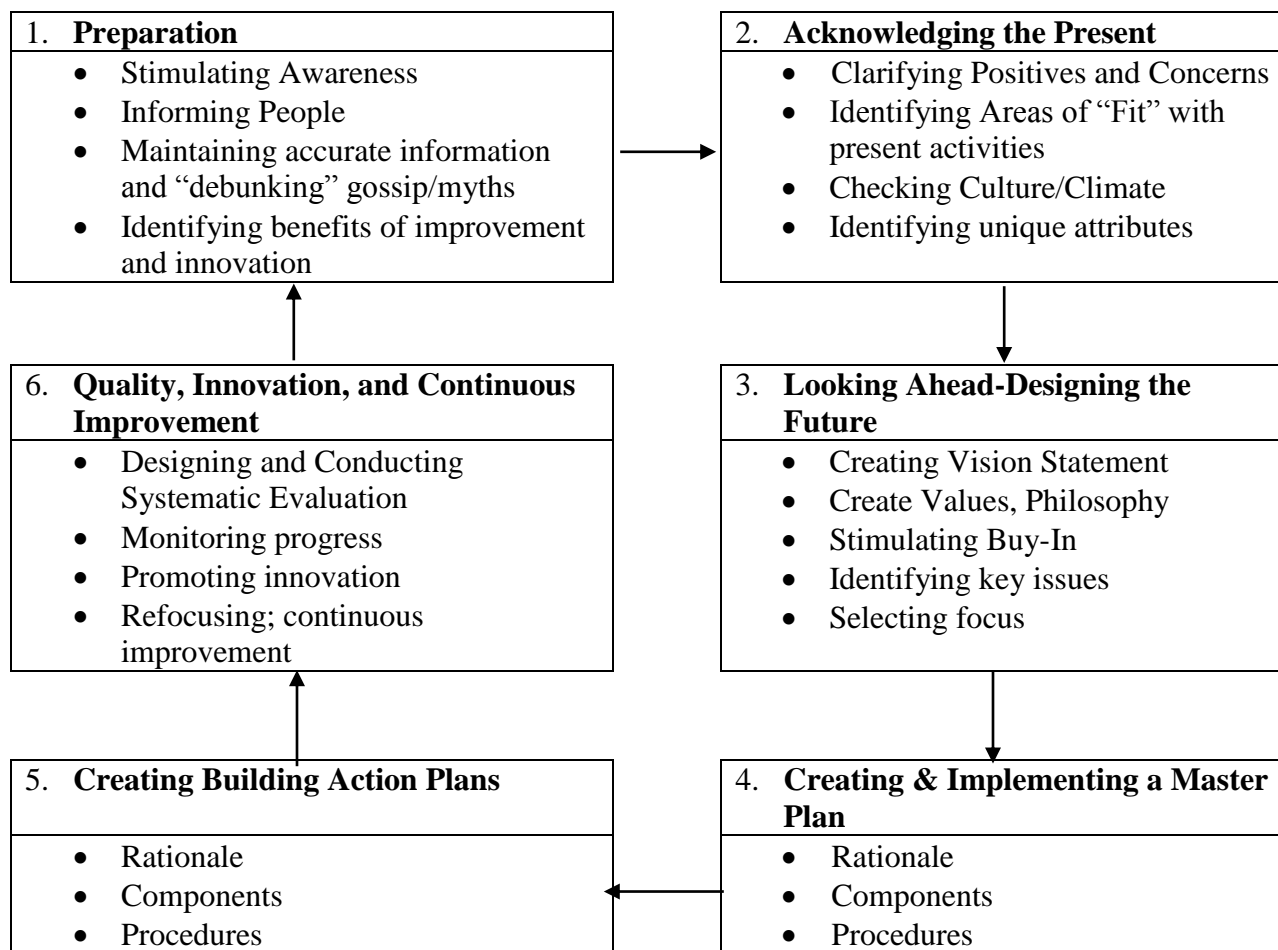
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There are six major stages which provide the foundation for the planning process recommended in these Guidelines. Detailed discussions of these, and resources for addressing them effectively, will be provided in subsequent chapters of this handbook. Our present purpose is to provide you with an overview or “advance organizer” for the planning process.

Gifted programming, considered in a contemporary way, is not an isolated or stand alone concern. It can and should be related to many other important planning efforts within the school. It is particularly important and effective to relate gifted programming efforts to school improvement effort. Programming for giftedness and talent development can become an integral part of the school program and not an isolated event. The planning process in this Volume parallels and complements the North Dakota State School Improvement Planning Manual (1991; SSIPM). We have noted where such connections are found, and we recommend you refer to the Manual to make the planning process as “seamless” or integrated as possible.

On the following page we have included a graphic *A Process Approach to Planning*, to illustrate the overall planning process.

## A Process Approach to Planning



The Chapters in which each of the six planning process stages will be addressed are described below.

### Chapter 3. Preparation.

In preparing for Gifted Programming it is important to complete four steps:

- A. Stimulating awareness
- B. Informing people
- C. Maintaining accurate information
- D. Identifying benefits of improvement and innovation

At this stage it is important to complete these steps and open the best possible communication channels between the school and the public. (See SSIPM page 1, number 1, (a-c) and page 1, number 2, letter b.)

## **Chapter 4. Acknowledging the present**

The second major planning responsibility is a thorough self-study that involves an open acknowledgement of your present context, commitment, and activities. Steps to accomplish this self-study are:

- A. Clarifying positives and concerns
- B. Identifying areas of “fit: with present activities
- C. Checking culture/climate
- D. Identifying unique attributes of the district

(See SSIPM pg.2, number 3, (a-d), page 3, number 1, (a-b, d) and pgs. 29-31)

## **Chapter 5. Looking ahead – designing the future**

The third major planning step involves looking at the future. To help you create a plan for designing the future, we recommend following these steps:

- A. Creating a vision statement
- B. Create values, philosophy
- C. Stimulating buy-in
- D. Identifying key issues
- E. Selecting focus

(See SSIPM Appendix E, pg. 26, Sub-committee on Philosophy and Goals.)

## **Chapter 6. Creating and implementing the Master Plan**

The District Level Master Plan provides a general umbrella or an overall set of parameters which will guide and support subsequent efforts at the building level. It establishes a framework within which each building can work. Through District level planning, key issues regarding support and resources will be clarified. Steps in creating and implementing the Master Plan are:

- A. Develop a rationale for the Master Plan
- B. Study and review the components of an exemplary plan
- C. Study procedures for reviewing, implementing and revising

(See SSIPM page 26, Appendix E (all questions) for Districts to consider in writing the Master Plan. Also of particular relevance and help are pages: 5, number 1, (b-d); and pages 35-36.

## **Chapter 7. Creating and implementing Building Action Plans.**

The fifth stage in implementing gifted programming is creating and implementing Building Action Plans. Working within general parameters of the District Master Plan, each building should be charged with creating its own Plan of Action. The tasks in this stage can be initiated simultaneously with on-going planning at the District level and will certainly contribute to the discussions and work that take place at that level. Once the District Plan has been established,

buildings needs to undertake more specific and detailed planning, which will elaborate and extend their initial efforts. The steps involved are:

- A. Rationale and relationship to the Master Plan
- B. Essential components of Building Action Plans
- C. Study the procedures for reviewing, implementing, and revising

(See SSIPM – pages cited for the District Level Planning.)

### **Chapter 8. Quality, innovation, and continuous improvement: Procedures for reviewing, implementing, and revising.**

In order to accomplish the necessary balance between stability and change in a program, your plan should include specific provisions for evaluation data to be gathered, analyzed, and used in the decision-making process. It is important to consider, from the initial planning stages, the kinds of evaluation data that will be helpful and necessary, and the ways in which those data will be obtained, reviewed, and their results applied. Specific suggestions for evaluation will be provided in Chapter 8 of this Handbook.

Steps included are:

- A. Designing and conducting systematic evaluation
- B. Using evaluation data to monitor and document programming
- C. Using evaluation data to promote innovation and manage change
- D. Refocusing: Continuous improvement

To assist you in monitoring your progress as you undertake these six major stages, a checklist has been provided on the following page. Use this checklist to record the dates and decisions made by your District Planning Committee in relation to each of the six stages of the planning process.

It may be valuable for all members of the District Committee to have copies of this checklist as their work continues, so they can also participate in monitoring the decision-making process and have a realistic perspective on the committee's progress through the planning process.

<b>Task</b>	<b>Who Does It?</b>	<b>Date Begun</b>	<b>Action(s) and Dates</b>
<b>1</b>			
<b>2</b>			
<b>3</b>			
<b>4</b>			
<b>5</b>			
<b>6</b>			

## CHAPTER 3: PREPARATION

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*Someone, unknown to us but admirably wise, once wrote:  
“A project well planned is more than half completed!”*

In this Chapter we will explore the preparatory stages necessary for effective planning. These include: forming the District Planning Committee; developmental conception of leadership; planning for an effective group, establishing a working community for gifted programming; benefits of effective planning; running an effective meeting; collecting and maintaining accurate information; balancing continuity and coordination with autonomy; promoting innovation, dealing with change, and supporting champions of new ideas; and other important considerations in effective planning.

### Forming the District Planning Committee

Although the makeup of the Planning Committee may vary from one District or school to another, there are some “common threads” that run through the majority of successful planning committees. The fundamental principle for selecting participants for a planning committee is to seek breadth of participation. Your planning committee should represent a cross-section of your staff.

More specifically, those who should ordinarily be represented on a planning committee include:

- District Administrator(s)
- Building Administrator(s)
- Teachers at each unit involved (elementary, middle, senior high)
- Counselors
- Library or Media Specialist
- School Psychologist
- Gifted Education Specialist
- Curriculum Specialist

### School Board Participation

The participation of School Board members on the planning committee is a matter on which there are differences of opinion. Since we know of no research that has addressed this question specifically, we consider it entirely a *local option*. In some Districts, Board members seek involvement in planning committees, and participate actively. The benefits of Board participation can include: better consideration of resource and policy issues, improved communication between Board and staff, greater mutual understanding of needs and concerns, and the opportunity for the Board member to bring more complete and accurate information to the Board during its planning and decision-making. In other Districts, the Board may consider program planning as primarily the responsibility of the instructional and administrative staff, and so be less interested in active participation in such a committee.

## **Community and Parent Participation**

Although many of the issues to be addressed by the planning committee are professional in nature, and the general community would not be expected to have the technical background or expertise necessary to make such decisions, it is advisable for the planning committee to include parent and community participation. An informed community is more likely to be committed to support new programming. In addition, we must recognize that the quality, effectiveness, and impact of school programs on students in an area of concern as great to parents as to school professionals, for the lives and futures of their children are involved.

Finally, the committee can often benefit from the professional and technical expertise in other, related fields (e.g., financial or budgeting skills, knowledge of community history and resources, technology, etc.) which can be brought to the committee by community members. Parent representatives should be helped to think of their role on the committee in relation to *overall district program planning*, not merely advocacy for the immediate perceived needs of their own children.

## **Student Participation**

While it is not yet the usual or typical strategy in planning school programs by any means, it is not unheard of for students to be included in at least some aspects of the planning process. Students will provide unique perspectives regarding their school experiences, interests, and needs-and educators may gain valuable insights from their participation. The merit and appropriateness of student participation is a matter for the best judgment of each school District.

## **Size of the Committee**

The committee should be either small enough to be manageable or large enough to develop effective, working sub-committees. There is no “magic number,” but 8-12 is a reasonable range for the maximum size for effective communication and reasonable scheduling. Decisions about size may also be influenced, by the history of, (the District’s usual and traditional policies and practices) and the specific context of the District (e.g., number of schools or communities represented).

If the committee is too small, there is a greater risk that it will not effectively represent the interests and concerns of the District. There will also be likely to be too much work for everyone, so that individuals may easily become “bogged down,” discouraged, or unproductive. Finally, the committee may be too easily perceived by others as an “in-group” that serves only the needs and special interests of its own members. On the other hand, if the committee becomes too large, effective communication may become very difficult, both during meetings and for follow-through between meetings. Also, it will be difficult to schedule meetings, because of the conflicting schedules and time pressures on individual members. It is likely to be difficult to make decisions or reach consensus on difficult issues, and splinter groups or factions may develop easily.

## Philosophy and Values of the Committee Members

The members of the committee should be able to have their own copy of these Guidelines, Volumes I and II and it should be expected that all committee members will have read and studied the Guidelines in preparation for their work together. All committee members should have an opportunity to share their general attitudes, values, and commitments as educators; the committee will be strengthened by an explicitly commitment to making deliberate efforts to improve the quality of learning and instruction for students. The basic question, “Will this benefit students?” should not be overlooked nor be permitted to drop out of the committee’s sight; it should be clear and unequivocal statement of the vision that drives the planning process. There are three key questions, which should remain constantly prominent in our gifted programming efforts:

- Will this benefit students?
- Will it enhance our ability to “stretch” their talents and interests?
- Will it challenge students, and help us to bring out the best they can be and do?

## Human Factors

Efforts must also be made to insure that the committee:

*(a) Includes productive members.* It is likely to help to know something about the personalities and “track record” of individuals being considered for the committee. Who will really produce? Who will not lose interest quickly and drop by the wayside? Who within the District has a foundation of knowledge and skills to offer special expertise to the committee? Who will not use the committee to grind the same old axes? Strive to include on the committee those people who will make “good faith” efforts to contribute and work together, even though there may be honest disagreements or varying points of view among them, and who will be willing to put the success of the group ahead of their personal goals and agendas.

*(b) Includes people who have credibility or the respect of their peers.* In order to promote ownership and acceptance of the group’s efforts, it is important that the committee members are individuals who have earned the professional regard of their colleagues.

*(c) Has clout.* The committee must either (1.) [preferably] include people who have authority or responsibility for follow-up and decision-making, or (2.) have a charge in which it is clear that their efforts will lead to action, rather than just being set aside or tabled at higher levels.

*(d) Devotes time and effort that will be needed for group process and team building.* There is no “perfect group,” but people can learn to work together in productive and supportive ways. The committee should allow time to examine and understand the learning and thinking styles of individual members, and to establish guidelines and procedures for effective group management and decision-making.

The District Planning Committee does not have to be a new and separately-created committee; many school districts are already at or nearing “committee overload.” If your District already has

established a school improvement or long range planning committee, for example, it may be wise to incorporate the principles and tasks described in this Volume into its work. The District Planning Committee will continue to function throughout the planning stages described in this volume. It will also guide future planning and development in a continuing role.

### **Developmental Conception of Leadership**

Proper planning requires effective leadership, to be sure. However, it is very important to recognize that contemporary approaches to leadership, such as the work of Blanchard (1987) and his associates, emphasize that it is both situational and developmental. That is, different kinds of leadership behavior or “styles” will be appropriate and necessary, depending upon:

- The nature of the task, and the group’s knowledge and skills with respect to the tasks they are expected to complete.
- The willingness of the group to carry out the task.
- The amount of personal and interpersonal support required by group members.
- The group’s commitment and enthusiasm for carrying out the tasks.

Effective leadership implies that the leadership behaviors or strategies must be selected on the basis of knowledge of these factors and their interrelationships. No single style or approach will be equally effective across all tasks, for all participants, or for the same participants as tasks vary throughout a project. It is widely recognized today that effective leadership involves careful analysis of tasks, interpersonal relationships, and the developmental level (competence and commitment) of the group members. This analysis is followed by the selection and use of several different patterns or leadership styles (e.g., Blanchard et al., 1987). Through these contemporary models, leadership is best understood in relation to:

- Varied styles and strategies
- Active participation by all group members
- Shared responsibility among group members for decision making and impact.

Rather than viewing leadership as individual “heroics,” we now recognize the importance and value of bringing out the creativity and productivity of others in ways which recognize and build upon their strengths and talents. Successful leadership enables or empowers followers rather than permitting or allowing them to act.

### **Planning for an Effective Group**

There are a number of factors that will help you to establish an effective climate or setting for a productive planning committee. The factors we will highlight here are: getting acquainted, group behavior guidelines, understanding decision making dynamics and techniques, and having an informed, progressive outlook.

## Getting Acquainted

Begin group building by making sure everyone is introduced to each other. It is not enough to know each other's names. In larger districts with several buildings there may very well be people who know each other only as a face. Select and use an exercise to break the ice, and help people get to know each other; this creates a positive tone for future interactions.

Understanding each other and our various working styles is important in establishing a productive context for the committee. It will be helpful for the group to engage in some self-assessment of the members' preferred learning and working styles. For example, taking and discussing together instruments such as the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*, the Dunn, Dunn, and Price *Productivity Environmental Preference Survey*, or the *Kirton Adaptor-Innovator Inventory*, (see Volume I, Chapter 4) can help members of the group to understand better their own preferences and needs as well as the way other group members may differ. Although some instruments require trained personnel to administer, score, and interpret, you may have access to qualified people in your area. Alternatively, there are many informal inventories or self-description checklists which might be useful to help the group examine and discuss their preferences.

## Group Behavior Guidelines

It is important to establish some general guidelines for the group's behavior. The group would be well-advised, to adopt a principle called "Affirmative Judgment" (Treffinger and Isaksen, 1992). In an all-too-typical group situation, new ideas are often greeted with criticism or ridicule: "That won't work because...", or "We've already [or never] tried that before...", or any of a number of familiar *Idea-Killers*. The goal of Affirmative Judgment is to treat new ideas with more sensitivity, to give them a better opportunity to be examined and studied. Instead of saying, "Yes, **but**...", we say, "Yes, **and**..."

Instead of killing an idea or suggestion by finding all its faults and weaknesses, try inquiring, in an orderly way, about its "Pluses, Minuses, and Interesting Potentials." Express concerns by asking, "How might we...?" rather than by saying, "We can't because..." Affirmative Judgment insures that people will feel comfortable sharing their ideas even when those ideas are not set in stone. In fact, one thing Affirmative Judgment often does is to *prevent* the quick and rigid fixation on a particular idea or strategy that often occurs when people make decisions without an open mind. Affirmative Judgment helps to set a positive atmosphere, a constructive, "mindset," in which people can explore ideas for the mutual benefit of all.

## Understanding Decision-Making Dynamics and Techniques

Many planning groups flounder because they get "trapped" in endless rounds of discussion or argument, without ever being able to reach closure. The consequences are often very unpleasant for all concerned. Although such problems are sometimes described primarily as personality clashes, lack of leadership, or group dynamics problems, two other important factors should be considered:

- The **make-up of the group**. For example: Do all group members recognize and respond constructively to the unique strengths, styles, and interests of each group member? This helps to avoid stereotyping and personal arguments within the group. Planning at the District level should involve a group with a broad-based structure, so the major educational stakeholders (e.g., teachers, parents, administrators, community members, etc.) in the District will be able to exchange ideas and suggestions, and so the resulting decisions will be the best that can be reached. Similarly, at the individual school level, the stakeholders should also be identified and represented in the local planning process. Champlin (1986) offered excellent suggestions regarding the process of decision-making in program development and innovation.
- The presence or absence of **specific decision-making tools or techniques** for planning or problem solving. For example, do group members know and follow appropriate guidelines for deferring judgment when generating ideas, do they know specific methods and techniques for comparing and evaluating several options prior to making a decision? Knowing and using such strategies can help to reduce arbitrary, emotionally-stressed decision-making. Consideration should also be given to decision-making techniques, so the group will have specific procedures to employ, and knowledge of how to employ them. Some groups press for consensus, for example, without knowing whether or not it is an appropriate demand for the task at hand or without knowledge of specific consensus-building methods. Sometimes from a sense of democratic action, but at other times in frustration because consensus has not been reached, groups arbitrarily resolve an issue by simple majority vote. While beneficial and appropriate for some settings and decisions, majority votes are not the only, nor necessarily the best, technique for reaching decisions.

Other techniques can be used more productively in reaching certain decisions, such as a Paired Comparison Analysis, for ranking or prioritizing alternatives, or a Criterion Matrix for evaluating options using a variety of specific criteria (see for example, Van Gundy, 1987 or Treffinger and Isaksen, 1992). An excellent resource for information on the purposes, methods, and difficulties of consensus decision-making is *Building United Judgment* (available from the Center for Conflict Resolution, in Madison, Wisconsin).

## **Informed, Progressive Outlook**

It will help your group to seek to remain focused and aware of your tasks. Avoid the pressure for premature closure, making certain that many constructive ideas and questions can be heard. Help people within the group to avoid “locking in” on slogans or overly-emotional appeals. Find a nice way to let people know that blanket statements of “must” or “must not” seldom move the group forward.

Encourage an atmosphere of mutual discovery and exploration. Some sentence starters which encourage an open attitude include:

“I wonder how we might...?”  
 “In what ways might we?...?”  
 “Wouldn’t it be interesting if?...,”  
 “See what other ideas you can add to this one...,”  
 or, “Let’s play around with the idea of...”

Use and encourage all groups members also to use statements such as “That’s really interesting, and ...,” or “Could you say more about that idea? It sounds intriguing.” If people understand that planning is a process of mutual exploration, with the constant goal of setting the best possible course of action for our student and our schools, then such dialogue will follow easily.

Finally, make sure that everyone understands that this is a working group that will succeed only if everyone cooperates and does their part. It would be better to have fewer people working hard than to have meetings come to a screeching halt because the person who had been given the essential charge was “too busy” to get around to doing what (s)he had said would get done.

### **Establishing a Working Community for Gifted Programming**

Even before you begin to gather data, it is important to take some time to establish guidelines that you will use to insure that meetings are run smoothly and result in a high level of productivity. We feel certain that everyone reading this has sat through at least one unproductive meeting which left them feeling frustrated, angry and unenthusiastic about the topic being discussed. We hope that you will be able to avoid that in your meetings by laying down a few ground rules and working towards a certain level of effectiveness brought about by group building and desires for a common goal. The following guideline will help you establish a comfortable and productive atmosphere.

#### **State Your Goals at the Very Beginning**

At your very first meeting you should lay out some initial goals and if possible a rough timeline. An appropriate statement to make might be:

“We have been charged with exploring gifted programming. Our initial goals should be to establish a working definition and philosophy based on our district’s unique qualities, followed by a gathering of data about options that fit in with our definition and philosophy.”

Make sure that you also lay out for the group the timeline as you understand it; for example:

“The board would like an interim report in three months and I’d like to have a definition and philosophy – at least in rough draft – to show them.”

After laying out the purposes of the group, it is time to focus on the group itself. The group has a mission, but as yet they have no experience in working with each other, nor do they (in all likelihood) have a good feeling about how to get from goal to glory! We call this aspect of planning “group building” and it is a critical step in creating effective planning meetings. Without this step, your group may bog down in personality conflicts, political wrangling or “grandstanding” on the part of people who need lots of airtime.

## **Benefits of Effective Planning**

Good planning is beneficial for almost any project: a new business, an ice cream social conducted by a civic or church group, a student's independent study project...or a school's approach to gifted programming. The benefits are numerous, and a few are highlighted here.

### **Determine Goals and Objectives for Programming**

As Mager (1962) pointed out, we need to know where we're going, so we won't wind up somewhere else. While many people may initially agree that gifted programming is important or desirable for a school, an effective planning process will challenge them to look beyond superficial statements as they seek clarification and consensus regarding specific goals and objectives.

### **Focus on Priorities**

It will be important to keep our attention and effort focused on the directions and tasks that represent our true priorities, rather than supporting the drain of energies that results when committee members drift aimlessly from one task to another. Lack of focus on priorities causes unnecessary dissent in a group, inhibits progress, and results in loss of interest and non-participation by those involved in creating programs or conducting projects.

### **Facilitate Diffusion or Sharing of Responsibility**

Through a well-designed and implemented planning process, responsibility for the outcomes and results are spread among many colleagues, rather than merely assigning responsibility to individuals for success or failure.

### **Promote Effective Communication**

The planning process involves seeking input, ideas, questions, and concerns from a variety of sources. It creates opportunities for two way communication, offering checks and balances for better decisions and grassroots support and reducing the likelihood of overlooking important issues or concerns that are essential to success.

### **Build Ownership**

In all new programming efforts, commitment and support tends to be much greater when people have participated in creating the program, rather than having it handed to or imposed upon them from higher sources of authority. Individuals will make greater investment of their time and energy to programs which they have helped to create and justify, and there will be significantly stronger commitment to the success of the plan.

### **Stimulate Active Participation**

Many individuals bring unique talents, perspectives, and skills to the creation of effective programming; without a systematic planning process, many of these may go unrecognized and untapped.

### **Establish a Foundation for Subsequent Decisions**

Just as in our country's history, we have had to turn repeatedly to our Constitution for guidance in judicial decisions and vital checks and balances in monitoring executive and legislative actions and their consequences, a carefully-crafted planning document can provide a valuable reference point for future decisions.

### **Avoid Premature Closure**

Effective planning encourages careful examination of many approaches or models, employing criteria for determining their implications and suitability in relation to your school's unique character and needs, rather than adopting a particular model or viewpoint on the basis of recent exposure, emotional appeal, power bargaining among key individuals, or expedience.

### **Reduce Dependency on Unilateral or Charismatic Leadership**

Planning helps to insure that the success of programming will not be determined merely by the energy, enthusiasm, or credibility of a single individual who single-handedly takes charge of decisions and implementation. Programs which result from a single charismatic leader's actions may find life and support only as long as that person's "stock" remains high – or until she or he becomes interested in something else, or departs entirely from the school. Effective planning leads to services that outlive the tenure and actions of the individuals who first proposed them.

### **Running an Effective Meeting**

Despite the friendliest, most cooperative group, much time can be wasted if meetings are not run efficiently. There are many useful books that deal comprehensively with running effective meetings; we will offer only a few suggestions here as reminders.

### **Be A Good Time-Keeper**

Begin and end meetings on time. Don't set up open-ended planning meetings. There is an old wag who once observed that jobs expand to take up the time and space given to them. Let people know when you will begin and end and stick to those times. Your members will appreciate it and you will get better, more focused work from them, because they will understand their limited time to work together.

## **Allow for Debriefing**

Leave about 10-15 minutes at the end of each of the first few meetings to debrief the session. This can take the form of a simple assessment and sharing of the positive aspects, concerns (in the form, “How might we...”), and most interesting potentials from the meeting, as perceived by the participants. In this way, concerns can be dealt with and people can be appropriately praised for the work they have done.

## **Set Specific Goals**

State your goals for the meeting at the beginning of each meeting. Make clear statements of what is to be accomplished and by whom. Examples of good and poor goal statements follow. A poor example: “Today we are going to work on the definition and hear some summaries of readings. After those people are done, we’ll discuss the readings and then talk about how we’re doing as a group.” A much better example might be: “Today, three people will report on the reading they have done. We’ll give them 5-10 minutes each. After that, we will be breaking down into groups and looking for the commonalties from each reading’s definitions of giftedness. Finally we will take about ten minutes before our agreed upon adjournment time of 4:30 p.m., to discuss how today’s meeting went.” The second group leader has a much better chance of getting people involved in the business of the meeting and working together effectively.

## **Model Appropriate Behaviors**

Act as good role models for your committee. Model affirmative judgment. Praise the efforts of others. Keep the meetings focused. If necessary, ask the group, “What did we say our goals were for today? I’m a little concerned about the time...[or whatever].” Try to draw out people who don’t contribute much and gently help those who take up too much airtime to streamline their speeches. One favorite phrase of ours is “Ralph, [or Susan, or whoever] I’m having trouble digesting all this. Could you headline it for us in just a sentence or two, to highlight the main points of your comment?”

## **Keep Written Records**

Don’t assume that everyone will remember the decisions that were made, or that, if they think they do remember, all the recollections will agree. The best way to avoid disputes and endless re-doing of tasks is to keep careful minutes of your meetings. In those, highlight actions that have been designated, the people to whom they are designated, and the time for completing and reporting those assignments.

## **Collect and Maintain Accurate Information**

In any careful planning, a balance must be struck between gathering *so much* data, on the one hand, the need to gather *enough* data to be able to make good decisions. In this section we will describe four major categories of data (which were outlined in general terms in the preceding section), as well as a sampling of the kinds of questions that your committee may want to ask

about these areas. These include data about: the District and Building levels; programming models; resources and available funding; and inservice and staff development.

### **District and the Building Levels**

This includes factors such as: identifying the interested parties in the District, the programs or modifications already in existence, and understanding staff attitudes and needs.

### **Programming Approaches**

This includes factors such as: information about many models and approaches, people in your area who have training and experience with various approaches, schools in which particular approaches have been used successfully, and the ways in which various approaches appear to be (or not to be) compatible with your District's values, goals, philosophy, and vision.

### **Resource and Available Funding**

This includes factors such as: grant monies available, materials and human resources available, and information about the District's commitment to allocate resources to the program.

### **Inservice and Staff Development**

This includes such factors as: available training resources, information about who will be inserviced, schedules, format for programs, and follow-up plans.

These four categories encompass a wide variety of possible data sources and needed information. If we cross these categories with the news reporter's familiar: who, what, when, where and how," we can create a matrix. This matrix can help you determine which questions to ask and also guide you in setting priorities, by determining which issues need to be addressed first. A sample of such a matrix is presented in the figure on the following page. The questions in the sample matrix are intended to be **illustrative**, not prescriptive, and are certainly not comprehensive.

We recommend that you examine this matrix carefully, noting your ideas for questions that should be asked, based on the unique needs of your district. We also recommend that if some of the questions have answers that leap out at you, record those answers as data already available for your planning.

Three major tasks of your initial planning meetings (after your initial group building and discussion of procedures for effective meetings) can be described as: **seek**, **sort**, and **share**. A significant part of your early times may be spent in determining who will get out and get what information and when and how it can be shared with the full committee.

Type of Data	Who	What	When	Where	How
<b>District and School Data</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who are the people in our District interested in programming?</li> <li>Who in our District has training in G/T?</li> <li>Who will be the “allies” and who will be the “challenges?”</li> <li>What parents might be willing to contribute?</li> <li>Who else in the District will be important to contact or involve?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What already exists in our District?</li> <li>What are teachers already doing/feeling?</li> <li>What resources do we already have?</li> <li>What do we need? (immediately? Soon? In the future?)</li> <li>What have we tried?</li> <li>What are the major interests among school staff and administrators?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When should planning begin?</li> <li>When will programming efforts begin?</li> <li>When should meetings be held?</li> <li>When will we report the results of our planning efforts?</li> <li>When to conduct inservice and community awareness?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where should we start? (Schools? Grade Levels? Tasks?)</li> <li>Where are examples of excellent programming?</li> <li>Where can we learn more?</li> <li>Where can we find observers or others to help document our efforts?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How should we divide or share the planning tasks?</li> <li>How will priorities be established?</li> <li>How might we build motivation and support among staff and community members?</li> <li>How might the plan be phased in gradually?</li> </ol>
<b>Programming Models Data</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who has expertise in various programming models?</li> <li>Who might be willing to research and make presentations about various models?</li> <li>Who else in our area uses various models in their District?</li> <li>Who has interest in advanced study in G/T?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the models?</li> <li>What aspects of any model might be most or least useful to us?</li> <li>What can we do to assess various models?</li> <li>What books/materials do we have or need?</li> <li>What do the models actually look like in practice?</li> <li>What “track records” do models have?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When were various models developed?</li> <li>When have research or evaluation data been reported?</li> <li>When is the best time to introduce or review new models?</li> <li>When have models been updated?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where are other Districts in which models have been used?</li> <li>Where is support and advanced training available for our staff?</li> <li>Where was the model tested and evaluated?</li> <li>Where was the model not successful?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How might we learn as much as possible?</li> <li>How might we compare various models?</li> <li>How might models be adapted to our needs?</li> <li>How might several models be synthesized?</li> </ol>
<b>Resources and Funding Data</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who can provide or help us find resources? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community groups?</li> <li>Governmental (local, state, federal) aid?</li> </ul> </li> <li>Who is experienced, skilled, willing to help in fund-raising?</li> <li>Who makes Budget decisions?</li> <li>Who might help us write grant proposals.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What resources do we need... (staffing? Materials? conferences? inservice?)</li> <li>What existing resources can be used?</li> <li>What contributions might be obtained?</li> <li>What needs are most pressing or immediate?</li> <li>What changes must we expect over time?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When are various resources needed?</li> <li>When must we apply for support?</li> <li>When must a budget be proposed?</li> <li>When are funding decisions made?</li> <li>When can funds be available and used?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where can we look for help with funding?</li> <li>Where can we get help in preparing grant proposals?</li> <li>Where can proposals be sent?</li> <li>Where can we get free or inexpensive help or resources?</li> <li>Where might we use trading services or “bartering” for support?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How might we gain community support?</li> <li>How can funding priorities be set?</li> <li>How can limited resources be overcome creatively?</li> <li>How might we use volunteers?</li> <li>How might more people become involved in support?</li> </ol>
<b>Inservice and Staff Data</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who will benefit from inservice?</li> <li>Who is seeking inservice?</li> <li>Who can provide inservice for us?</li> <li>Who has heard various presenters?</li> <li>Who in our area might share their experiences and expertise with us?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What options might be considered? (needs assessment? mini-grants? Team projects?)</li> <li>What are the goals?</li> <li>What increases the effectiveness or impact of inservice?</li> <li>What present inservice programs can be related?</li> <li>What new approach should be considered?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When should inservice work begin?</li> <li>When is the best time for inservice?</li> <li>When can staff be involved in planning?</li> <li>When can staff members observe other teachers or programs?</li> <li>When are training programs or conferences held?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where might inservice programs best be held? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools?</li> <li>Hotels?</li> <li>Retreats?</li> <li>College campus?</li> <li>Conference center?</li> <li>Other schools?</li> <li>Community facilities?</li> <li>Camps or lodges?</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How might staff support be increased?</li> <li>How might new forms of inservice be tried?</li> <li>How might “rewards” be provided for new projects and ideas?</li> <li>How might cooperative programming efforts best be managed?</li> </ol>

## **Balancing Continuity and Coordination with Autonomy**

In planning for gifted programming, it is always a complex challenge to create and maintain the proper balance between centralized, District-wide decision-making and autonomous decision-making by individual schools.

On the one hand, there are a number of valid and important concerns that can probably best be considered District level matters. These lead to consistency among units of the District, continuity over time, coherence of overall philosophy and outlook, and fairness in resource allocation, management, and evaluation. There would probably be general agreement that the school District must accept the responsibility of setting general parameters for program design, development, and implementation, and for monitoring individual schools' efforts systematically.

On the other hand, there are also significant dimensions of program planning that may well be unique to each school, and thus, for which the planning may be best delegated to the individual building level. It is probably important, for example, to make the individual school or building the focal point for decisions in areas which involve:

- The specific culture, history, traditions, celebrations, and commitments of the school;
- Variability in administrative styles;
- Diversity of interests and talents among staff members;
- Demographic factors (parent and community make-up, geographic setting);
- Availability or proximity of specialized resources;
- Nature of school organization and structure, with emphasis on day-to-day instructional transactions between teachers and students.

The fundamental challenge, therefore, is to balance a centralized need for continuity and coordination with the individual school's need for autonomy and the opportunity to reflect its specific priorities and personality; this has been one of the issues at the heart of our concern in developing these guidelines.

The model proposed in these guidelines involves two levels of planning for effective programming. At the *macro* (large scale) level, the District should develop an overall plan or structure to guide each of its individual schools, and to promote comparability and continuity among individual school programs. At the *micro* (small scale) level, there are also specific considerations for individual schools, representing the individual character of each school. The Figure on the following page illustrates the major roles and responsibilities of the State Education Department, the District, and the local school.

## **Promoting Innovation, Dealing with Change, and Supporting "Champions" of New Ideas**

An effective planning committee often views itself as having a unique opportunity to introduce exciting new directions or dimensions into their school program. They should be aware of the complexities of creating and promoting new ideas in complex, bureaucratic organizations. In addition, they should understand the dynamics of the change process, studying and applying specific methods for bringing change about successfully. They should also be alert to the opportunity they have to recognize and support the "champions" (in the language of Peters and Waterman's book, *In Search of Excellence*) of new ideas for effective programming.

## **Problem Solving Outlook**

There are certainly no cookbooks that will lead to instant success in creating a modern, comprehensive approach to gifted programming. The planning committee must therefore also be prepared to deal with a number of challenges for which no easy answers or ready-made solutions will be available – situations which will require that they define a broad goal, consider many different sources of data, develop a specific problem state, generate and evaluate many alternatives, anticipate obstacles and resistance as well as sources of support, and create a Plan of Action of their own design. In short, they must be prepared to be problem solvers.

## **Knowledge Base**

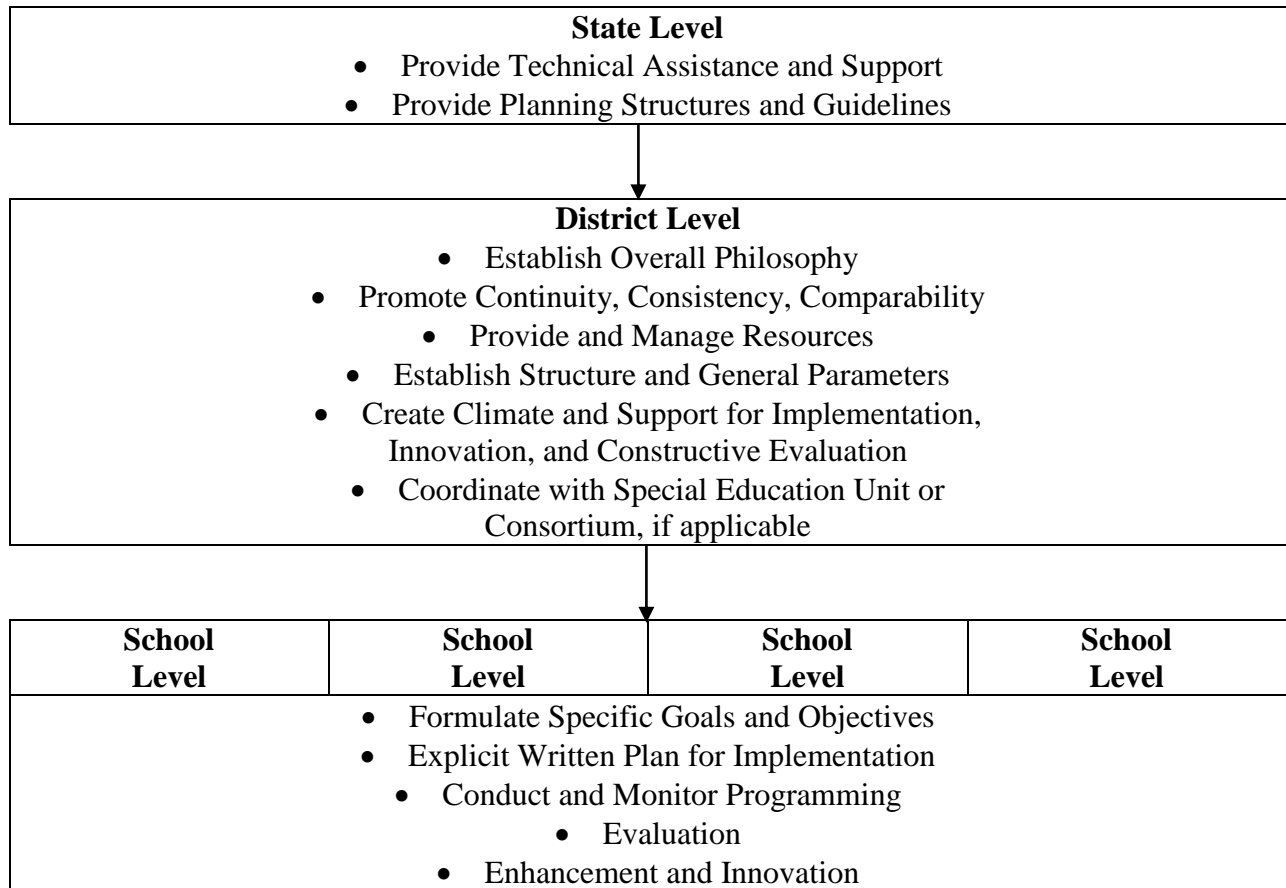
At any level, the effectiveness of the planning committee will be enhanced if its members are knowledgeable about contemporary theory, research, and practices in gifted education, either by virtue of prior training or study, or through deliberate efforts to read and study during the planning process. Good planning and decision-making does not result from the pooling of ignorance.

## **Expertise**

Another very important issue is the issue of expertise. Be very candid with your group about the need for views or positions that are informed and constructive. If there are people on the staff, or in your area, who have experience and training in Gifted Education, use them as resources, and invite their input. But do not feel that you must accept anyone's advice as a mandate. Be especially wary of would-be expert advisors whose main goal is to sell you (figuratively, or even on occasion, literally) a particular package or program; don't be badgered, and reserve the right to read, study, and analyze alternatives critically.

The topic of expertise also raises the question of the role of outside consultants. Consultants can be very helpful in the planning process, but it is important to think carefully about what (and what not) to expect. Some tips include:

- Avoid the "GURU-OF-THE-MONTH Club" approach. Know why you need consulting support, and set specific plans and objectives.
- Don't be hesitant to ask questions before you contract with a Consultant.
- Ask for and check, credentials and references.



The chart on below offers some indications of the support and assistance you can (and cannot) expect to receive from consultants.

<b><i>Consultants Can:</i></b>	<b><i>Consultants Can't:</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help set tasks and objectives</li> <li>• Identify relevant resources</li> <li>• Inspire, Motivate (Be a Sounding Board and Listening Post)</li> <li>• Identify sites to visit and questions to ask</li> <li>• Help guide you through the research and theory maze</li> <li>• Help outline several options and their possible consequences as well as their “interlock” with other decision areas</li> <li>• Share experiences</li> <li>• Facilitate problem solving efforts impartially</li> <li>• Assist in data collection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan your Program for you</li> <li>• Give you a ready-made package for success</li> <li>• Do your program for you (they go home!)</li> <li>• Resolve hidden agendas which may exist (contract disputes, etc.)</li> <li>• “Sell” the program for you</li> <li>• Know your school better than you do</li> </ul>

### **Other Important Considerations in Effective Planning**

Several other factors which we believe, on the basis of the best theory, research, and practical evidence available, are essential to success in any program planning process:

#### **Take Your Time**

Poorly planned programs won't thrive in the long run. It is important to allow ample time for program development. ***The initial planning stages in a District or school will generally require at least six months, and, more likely, one year.*** Creating written plans at the District and schools level are the beginning steps in accomplishing successful programming.

Implementation, staff development and participation, community awareness and support, and modifications as the plans are translated into practice, involve more extended time and effort. In many important ways, these are *on-going* concerns in all high-quality programs. Successful programming requires care and feeding, which will extend beyond the initial planning year, and may require three to five years beyond that.

#### **Input by Schools at District Planning Level**

It is essential to thorough planning that all schools within a District should be represented in the District wide planning process, since the results of that process will define the broad parameters within which planning at the school level will operate. The best way to insure that each Building in the District is informed of policies and procedures, and involved in their development, is by their representation and active participation in the District level planning.

#### **The Need for a Specific Written Plan**

Your goals, decisions, and intended procedures should be presented in a specific, detailed, written plan. This will help to insure:

1. Everyone will know what decisions have been made. No one will truthfully be able to say, "I didn't know that decision had been made."
2. The program plan will exist beyond the initial energies and enthusiasm of its original proponents. Without written guidelines, programming may exist only in the minds of the original champions, or survive only as long as those champions are present and involved.
3. A written plan provides a basis for on going study, review, and modification, without the need to reinvent the wheel.

### **Written Products that Result from Planning**

From the planning process and the planning committee's efforts, several different kinds of documents or written products may result. Following is a list of five, with a short description of each.

1. *Comprehensive District Master Plan.* A complete and detailed district Master Plan, the content of which will be addressed in detail in Chapter 6.
2. *Executive Summary.* It may also be helpful to prepare a concise summary of the District Master Plan's major features, and their implications for policy or fiscal purposes, for those who wish to acquaint themselves with the Plan's general content.
3. *Marketing Plan.* A separate document, describing the District committee's plans for presenting and reviewing the Master Plan with various important "constituencies" within the District: the Board, the administration, the staff, the community, and the students, may also be helpful to have.
4. *Time Line.* A concise summary, outlining the major stages in program development for approximately three to five years, can be used to establish a broad framework for program development, extending beyond the initial planning year.
5. *Building Level Action Plans.* For each building or school, there will also be a specific, written Action Plan, as provided by the Master Plan. The content and development of the Action Plan is discussed in Chapter 6 of this book.

These products will help to insure that programming will be implemented successfully throughout the school District's units.

## Summary

In this Chapter we have dealt with nine major concerns that must be addressed early in the planning process:

- Forming and preparing an effective group;
- Developmental conception of leadership;
- Planning for an effective group;
- Establishing a working community for gifted programming;
- Benefits of effective planning;
- Running an effective meeting;
- Collecting and maintaining accurate information;
- Balancing continuity and coordination with autonomy;
- Promoting innovation and dealing with change.

Below on this page you will find a District Planning Committee start up checklist. This checklist is intended to be a guideline for your preparation.

In the next Chapter, we will consider the importance of the acknowledgement of the present in the planning process.

<b>District Planning Committee – Start-up checklist</b>
o 1. Have the School Board and central administration taken whatever steps may be necessary to authorize a planning committee and to support that committee's work?
o 2. Has the need for such a committee been established among administrators and staff?
o 3. Has a responsible, effective person accepted the responsibility for organizing and convening the District Planning committee?
o 4. Has the size and structure for the committee been determined?
o 5. Has there been an opportunity for prospective committee members to identify themselves, and have specific committee members been determined?
o 7. Has there been any preliminary gathering of data to provide initial input for the committee?
o 8. Have decisions been made, and appropriate resources or materials obtained, for the necessary group building and organizational tasks of the initial committee meeting?
o 9. Has an appropriate date, time and place been established for an initial meeting?

## CHAPTER 4: ACKNOWLEDGING THE PRESENT

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The second process planning step involves taking stock of the current reality in your school or school district. This will provide you with a starting point for effective discussion and planning.

National statistics about what's wrong or what needs improvement cannot be applied directly to any individual district or school. Furthermore, good planning does not begin with stereotypes or vague assertions about what is, or might be, the case in your setting. Thus, begin your efforts by finding out where you really are.

In practice, we have found that there are other important benefits of acknowledging the present. First, you will get people talking together, focussing their attention on the challenges of improvement and innovation. We've found that it is very important and helpful to provide these opportunities. Second, you are very likely to discover that there are many positive dimensions of your current reality. Becoming aware of these will help to reduce defensiveness about improvement efforts, offset some stresses and tensions produced by the constant bombardment of what's wrong with our schools, and give you a constructive foundation on which to build. Third, as you look at a new set of goals and challenges – whether from America 2000 or another source – you will be able to identify some present efforts that already fit with the recommendations. (See Volume 1, Chapter 3-6). This provides a comfortable entry point for additional work and study.

You will also benefit from early efforts to look closely at your school's organizational culture and climate, at your unique attributes and resources, and at some of the personal and organizational blocks or barriers that will need to be confronted and overcome.

### **Expectations for Excellence**

The District Planning Committee should make an explicit commitment to setting goals and expectations for excellence, not only for the overall District Master Plan, but for each school's effort as well. In order to realize its fullest potential for impact in public education, gifted programming must be approached in ways that are linked consistently with our growing knowledge of the factors which contribute to effectiveness and productivity in school programs in general. The particular importance of this linkage for gifted education derives from the need to establish and sustain a productive context for learning.

Students' strengths and talents must be challenged at a high level, not merely tolerated. To help students to grow at an appropriate rate, commensurate with their ability and interests, it is necessary to provide challenging materials and resources, high quality instruction, and opportunities for students to work closely with adults who model reflective, analytical, and creative intellectual effort and productivity. A climate in which learning is valued, in which "the life of the mind" and the examination of complex issues and ideas will be encouraged, and in which there are high expectations for everyone, is a climate in which gifted education can be integrated in meaningful ways into the total school program. Without a clear, strong commitment to excellence in education, and an on-going effort to translate that commitment into action, statements about integrating gifted and regular programming may become mere slogans or a superficial glossing over that does not really provide appropriate services for students.

We can also profit from examining closely what is known about excellence in other kinds of organizations, such as those in business and industry. Knowledge from recent research in such

fields as human relations, management science, and organizational development, helps us clarify the meaning of and conditions for organizational excellence, and has significant implications for us in designing and conducting educational programs. Several elements that are essential components of excellent and effective schools, drawn from the work of Lewis (1986), will be summarized in this chapter.

For our present purposes, climate considerations will be discussed as they pertain to adults (e.g., the staff and administration) and as they influence the overall climate of the school. Many of these issues can also be translated readily, however, into components of importance and concern in establishing and maintaining a climate for challenge and productivity within the classroom and in relation to the transactions which occur between teachers and students.

### **Assessing the School Climate for Excellence**

Some of the questions or issues which can help you to assess or “take stock” of your school or District’s climate for excellence are summarized in the checklist on the following page. Such a self-study audit may be useful in helping you examine these issues in relationship to the unique aspects of your setting. Areas in which you believe your school needs to expand its efforts can be addressed as part of your District master plan.

<b>A Climate for Excellence – Some Self Study Questions</b>
• What are the positives that already exist about our school?
• How do we recognize these positives?
• How are these positives recognized by our community?
• What is unique about our school climate?
• In what ways do we recognize or celebrate this?
• What five words or phrase best describes our school?
• What five words or phrase best describes our philosophy about education?
• What is the best thing that has happened in this school in the last two years?
• What is the worst thing that has happened?
<b>For the next six questions, please rank the effectiveness of the school on a scale of 1-10. (1=no effort in the area; 10=great deal of effort)</b>
o To what degree is our school culture collaborative and supportive?
o To what degree is our school open to new ideas or suggestions?
o To what degree do we encourage and support people who take risks?
o To what degree do we recognize and reward staff members efforts?
o To what degree do we use specific, definable criteria to rate performance?
o To what degree do we engage in long range planning as opposed to reacting to crises?

## **Connections Among Programming Concerns**

Lewis (1986) proposed that there are several ways schools might take advantage of what has been learned from research on excellence in other organizations. Many of his proposals illustrate quite effectively ways to “link” important common concerns among gifted programming, school effectiveness, and school improvement. The following eight points draw on the work of Lewis, as well as our own.

### **Intensify and Personalize Communications**

The first suggestion to encourage excellence is a simple and powerful one. Communications should be personal and should occur regularly. We encourage you to communicate face to face when possible and not rely on memos to disseminate important information. Meetings should be frequent but intentional and focused. Administrators should maintain an “open door” policy so that people feel free to come and discuss problems and ideas. In addition, administrators should be visible in and around the school and should be asking questions like, “What’s new?” Casual conversations sometimes lead to great ideas or good solutions to long-standing problems partially because the pressure of official communication is not there. Intensified communication also allows champions or highly successful teachers to surface and assert themselves, rather than working in isolation. Finally, we suggest that you institute annual “State of the School” meetings for staff and community. These meetings allow all staff to reflect on the school and set goals for the following year.

### **Reach Important Decisions by Consensus**

Consensus decision making is a powerful tool and should be used when it is important to get everyone involved in implementing a plan. Someone once said that a consensus decision is one you can live with but wouldn’t necessarily die for. While we find this humorous, we also want to note that when people have put energy into a decision and the decision is a good one, they often want to do more than just live with it. At worst, they will not sabotage a decision made through consensus; at best, they will put their energies into seeing that the solution is implemented successfully. While consensus decision making initially seems cumbersome and painfully slow, the net result is increased ownership and more people involved in implementation. Anyone who has tried to implement a decision that did not meet with the approval of one or more parties involved can appreciate the time wasted in circumventing these potential saboteurs.

### **Become Closer to Students**

When we get wrapped up in committees, textbook selection, curriculum revisions, and testing schedules, it is easy to lose sight of our primary function: to serve the students entrusted to us. The more time and effort spent on being with, talking with (and listening closely to) students, the better the results and the more students will be willing to work. It is essential to develop insights into students’ contemporary interests, activities, and concerns, and to create opportunities for quality time with students, in order to attain excellent efforts. Consider, as examples, possibilities such as creating times and places for informal conversations, break-time, or “brown bag lunch” sessions of staff and students, cooperative staff and student involvement in student problem solving. More formal efforts might include home visitations, small group discussion and counseling sessions, retreats, suggestion systems, quality circles, staff and student involvement in problem solving around the school, creating and working with special hobby or interest groups.

## **Adopt a Suggestion Program**

This rather simple idea can be extremely effective especially when the entire school is involved. You will need a person to oversee the program and some method for rewarding people whose ideas are used. While monetary rewards work best, there are many different kinds of awards that could be given. In order for a suggestion program to work well, people must feel that their ideas will be seriously considered and that they will be rewarded for their efforts.

## **Give New Emphasis to Training and Professional Development**

Training in this context means something far different from the traditional Superintendent's Conference Day. Training is a broad term and includes varied methods for learning including such contemporary ideas as peer observation and peer coaching. The greater the variety of learning methods, the greater your chances of getting many people involved. We suggest that you think broadly about the issue of training and create a variety of methods for learning that can meet the varied needs of your staff. Variety needs to come not only from the methods used to present new information, but also the level at which that information is presented. For example, you might begin thinking about ways in which teachers who already have some expertise can be excused from introductory level workshops and have time to pursue related topics at a more advanced level.

Professional development is a critical component of your programming effort. Without adequate preparation and expertise, programming will lack support and effectiveness. Modern practice views staff development as an ongoing process involving several stages, which are summarized on the next page.

- Assessing needs, to determine areas of concern and interest, and to plan for appropriate professional development opportunities;
- Establishing ways to meet the stated needs within existing staff development models and programs, or by developing new initiatives;
- Planning and implementing a variety of staff development options or activities;
- Assessing the effectiveness of the staff development program;
- Revising and recycling.

In viewing staff development this way, Districts encourage staff to expand their confidence and motivation as well as their skills. A valuable resource on staff development and change is *Taking Charge of Change*, by Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin, and Hall, published by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (1987). It will help your Committee understand how change occurs and how best to facilitate it in your staff.

## **Recognize and Reward Excellence**

Rewards work! Appropriate rewards stimulate people to new levels of productivity. In addition to rewarding people, it is important to recognize those people in front of their peers as widely as possible. This is important for two reasons. First of all, if other people know about someone's achievement, they can add to the benefits of the reward by recognizing that individual and praising them on their own. The second added benefit is that when recognition is offered and products are displayed, others get an intimate view of what excellence can be. Perhaps that excellence will seem more accessible if it is clear that one's own colleague has done something

successfully. We often teach by example in our classrooms and by publicizing successes we not only reward the creators, we offer examples of successful performance to others.

### **Achieve Excellence Through Teams**

Excellence is often created through a team effort. This becomes very clear when we look at recent inventions. Early in this century we saw individual inventors such as Bell and Edison achieve fame and recognition largely through their individual efforts. Most recently however, inventions are the work of companies or teams. Examples include the silicon chip, the 800 number concept and the technology in modern “jumbo jet” aircraft such as the Boeing 757 and 767. As knowledge becomes more and more specialized, team work becomes more and more important. This is as true in education as it is in business. No one can keep up with all the literature in curriculum, effective education, learning styles and strategies, etc. Therefore, it is our best interests to create excellence in education through the use of effective teams which draw from many levels and areas of expertise.

In addition, teams offer built-in support, recognition and increased communication. All too often the structure for educational leadership was traditionally viewed as a collection of equally ranked (though not equally competent) teachers who are overseen by a single figure: the principal. While larger districts sometimes make use of department or grade level chairs, it is not unusual to find a large number of teachers, and many modern approaches to site based management and participative decision-making involve very different structures. Creating teams can increase the level of professional and personal support teachers can offer each other. In addition, teams offer ready made committees for planning and implementing various innovations.

### **Support Teacher Autonomy and Encourage Intrapreneurship**

While it may seem like a contradiction in terms to encourage autonomy and team building at the same time, it is not. If we support the autonomy of teachers, and encourage them to invent and implement on their own, they will have a sense of increased ownership and investment in program development and improvement. Rather than feeling that they are merely carrying out orders, they will be implementing something they have created and in which they have a vested interest and commitment for success. Successful managers know that encouragement and support are often more effective in getting a job done well than continuous critical appraisals and constant inspection. “Intrapreneurship” is a term that has recently become popular to describe systematic and deliberate efforts that are being made in a number of successful and innovative organizations, in which the organization, in contrast to the more traditional term, “entrepreneur,” used to describe people who, on their own, seek to develop new directions and innovations, without the support of (and sometimes, having escaped a non-supportive climate in) an existing organization. School improvement and educational innovation will also benefit from the encouragement of creative efforts from within.

### **Stimulating Staff Involvement and Support for New Programs**

Employees who are encouraged to develop and implement their own ideas for improvement will have a much greater sense of ownership and responsibility for the success of the ideas. Programs that are developed building upon individual needs, interests, skills and readiness avoid the one size fits all program. Staff developed and supported programs focus on-going projects and team efforts, with appropriate follow up, and they draw the staff into leadership roles, building empowerment. These programs will avoid the focus on the charisma and skill of one staff

member or that of an outside consultant or presenter. The emphasis is on active participation and sharing, rather than on the isolated acquisition of knowledge.

## Build Bridges

Staff members who build, implement and support gifted programming will be the District's voice in both the school and the community. It is important, therefore, that they are effective communicators of the philosophies and programming efforts initiated in the District. Committee members who are effective bridges will be able to demonstrate the connections between the central philosophy of Maximizing Human Potentials and those of Programming for competence and talent development, learning styles, productive thinking, school improvement, innovation, and long-range planning for change.

Being a bridge in this context, then, takes on certain special characteristics illustrated in the following chart.

What Does It Mean To Be A "Bridge?"	
• Listening	• Being There
• Diagnosing	• Sheltering
• Informing	• Networking
• Training	• Sharing
• Coaching	• Enabling
• Guiding	• Delegating
• Leading	• Documenting
• Supporting	• Evaluating

## Examining Your School's "Programming Positives"

In this Chapter we have explored the school climate and the staff skills and attitudes needed for school excellence and gifted programming. The final step in the assessment of your District for excellence is to identify your *current reality*, starting with the *programming positives* that are already in place. Being by considering six areas of your school program and then ask for each area "What are you already doing effectively for students?" If you are not familiar with these six areas, refer to Volume I (Chapter 9), and to Appendix A in this Volume.

Areas of School Programs:	Effective Programming For:
• Individualized Basics	All Students
• Appropriate Enrichment	Many Students
• Effective Acceleration	Some Students
• Independence and Self-Direction	Few Students
• Personal Growth and Social Development	
• Career Orientation and Future Perspectives	

The worksheet on the following page will help you to capture and organize your responses to these questions, and the worksheet on the second following page will help you to consider the actions and commitments that will be needed to insure that those present positives remain strong and healthy.

## What are your Programming Positives? What's already in place?

Area	Level I-All	Level II-Many	Level III-Some	Level IV-Few
Individualized Basics				
Appropriate Enrichment				
Effective Acceleration				
Independence Self Direction				
Personal and Social Development				
Careers and Futures				

## Maintaining Your Programming Positives

Area	Who? (Key Players)	What these need to thrive:
Schoolwide		
Grade Levels or Subject Areas		
Team or Individuals		

## CHAPTER 5: LOOKING AHEAD-DESIGNING THE FUTURE

*If you only do what you've always done,  
you'll only get what you always got.*

Chapter 4 dealt with investigating the current reality of your District. Having completed the work in that planning step, you will have assessed your current programming positives, persons responsible for their continued growth, and concerns about programming needs. Knowing where you are now is just a beginning step towards innovation and improvement-the foundation for assessing where you want to be in the future. The planning stage presented in this Chapter shifts from the “current reality” to the “desired future state.” What will your school be like, three years or five years from now, if your improvement efforts have been successful? A District which is focused on a shared purpose, mission, or vision exhibits several specific characteristics, summarized in the chart below.

Districts with a Mission, Vision, or Shared Purpose
• Seek <i>win-win</i> outcomes, not <i>winners and losers</i>
• Have explicit, written goals
• Have a balance between their “desired future state” (how we want things to be) and the “current state” (how things are now)
• Maintain a sense of direction, focus, and moving forward
• Have a plan for the long haul, rather than being driven by immediate crises and quick “band aid” solutions

### Setting A Vision – Your Desired Future

*“The future doesn’t just happen...we create it!”*

*“If we don’t know where we’re going, any road will take us there.”*

In this Chapter you will be building a vision, based on your desired future state. The desired future state involves forecasting or projecting your ideal-the programming and school improvement results you want to see in five years. To create your vision, there will be five steps: (1) Asking future oriented questions, (2) Finding a metaphor, (3) Constructing wish lists, (4) Writing a desired future statement, and (5) Setting your vision.

- 1. Asking future oriented questions.** Examine the programming positives you identified in Chapter 4. In relation to those important positives already in place, what will change in the next five years? What will you need to do more of? Do better? Do less?

Identify programming positives that you hope will be the same in the next five years as they are now. What do you most wish to keep and preserve? How do those things now take place-things that the staff does? Students do? Others do?

In what ways do you see the role and activities of teachers and administrators changing over the next five years? What are some ways in which your District will be different in five years? (Consider the facts and figures at your disposal, but also your own wishes, hopes, or feelings!)

- 2. Finding a Metaphor.** Now that you are focused on the future, the next step in defining your desired future state is to find and develop a metaphor for your District. Although this is not the desired future statement, it will help you to identify and describe more accurately the components you wish to include. *A metaphor is a figure of speech in which we take a common term (an object, an event, a person, or a time or place), and use it to compare or describe something else that seems to be similar to it in a number of ways.* Review your responses to the questions in Step One. Try to think of something you consider a good comparison or metaphor for describing the way you would like to see your District five years from now.

<p><b>My metaphor for our District five years from now is:</b></p>	
<p><b>Because:</b></p>	
<p><b>That Object/Thing is...</b>  <b>(List several words or phrases that describe it!)</b></p>	<p><b>And our District is similar in these ways: (For each item, show how your District is similar to the metaphor.)</b></p>

**Feel free to experiment with *more than one* metaphor!**

When you find a metaphor that seems to you to do the best job of describing your vision of your District in five years, please use a large sheet of chart paper and some markers to **draw** it. Make it good-sized, using the whole sheet of paper, so we will be able to see it easily. Don't worry about your artistic ability-we're interested in your ideas, not your drawing skills. Use some words or phrases to help clarify your drawing if you wish. Keep these metaphors for use in later activities.

3. **Constructing Wish Lists.** Your metaphors will guide you in identifying the *new directions* your need and want to follow for school improvement. We refer to these as "wish lists." Use the following charts (on this page and page 70) to help you consider and organize your wish lists. These provide the second element of your desired future state.

### What does your Wish List include?

Area	Level I-All	Level II-Many	Level III-Some	Level IV-Few
<b>Individualized Basics</b>				
<b>Appropriate Enrichment</b>				
<b>Effective Acceleration</b>				
<b>Independence Self Direction</b>				
<b>Personal and Social Development</b>				
<b>Careers and Futures</b>				

## Preliminary Planning For Attaining the Wishes

Area	Who? (“Champions”)	What’s needed to start? Expand?
<b>Schoolwide?</b>		
<b>Grade Level or Subject Area</b>		
<b>Team or Individuals</b>		

- 4. Writing a desired future statement.** From your metaphor and your wish lists, formulate a statement describing what you want your District to be like in five years. From your metaphor, list the most important elements to be included in your desired future statement. Then capture the most important and intriguing elements from your wish lists to include in your statements. From these, synthesize a statement that will capture the essence of where you are going, and ideally, where you hope your District will be five years from now.

Metaphor Elements:	Wish List Elements:
<b>Desired Future Statement:</b>	

- 5. Setting your vision.** You have now defined your current reality and your desired future state, and are ready to create a vision statement. The vision statement will be your first step in creating the District Master Plan, described in the next Chapter. The vision statement will describe, succinctly, the tension that exists between your current reality and your desired future state. The vision statement will give an overall picture of where you want to be. There are several components to a powerful vision statement; these are summarized below.

<b>Powerful Vision Statements</b>
• Describe a preferred and meaningful future state
• Evoke images in the minds of others
• Give people a better understanding of how their purpose could be manifested
• Are perceived as achievable
• Come from the heart – are genuine
• Are lofty, challenging, and compelling
• Are easy to read, concise
• Free from statistics, numbers, and methods for achieving the vision
• Are expressed in the present tense
• Are free from negative or competitive phrases

Source: Parker, M. (1990). *Creating shared vision*. Oslo, Norway: Norwegian Center for Leadership Development.

Now create a vision statement for your District. Work from the desired future statement that you developed earlier. Remember to word your vision statement in the present tense. Use the following page as a vision worksheet. Your vision statement, along with your working notes (desired future state, current reality, programming positives, and wish lists) will be valuable input data as you construct your District Master Plan and Building Action Plans.

### **Vision Statement Worksheet**

<b>Desired Future Statement:</b>
<b>Vision Statement:</b>

## CHAPTER 6: CREATING THE MASTER PLAN

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In Chapter 5 you created a vision statement. This should be the guiding philosophy in creating the Master Plan. Refer to your vision statement frequently, to maintain an effective and appropriate focus. It is a good idea to create a poster of your vision statement, and display it where all can see it as you work on the Master Plan. Your wish lists and programming positives will also help you as you formulate specific goals and objectives in subsequent planning stages.

### The District Master Plan

The District Planning Committee's major responsibility is to develop a specific, comprehensive written Master Plan. This plan is important for several reasons:

- It expresses the commitments that have been made at the District level to create and support gifted programming in all schools in the District.
- It serves as a foundation to guide and direct the development, implementation, and evaluation of individual school plans.
- It provides a foundation for proposals for resources and support for programming.
- It establishes the "history" or context, upon which subsequent efforts (program evaluation or modification, for example) can build.
- It facilitates communication and coordination among individual schools within the district.

### Specific Components of the Master Plan

The District's Master Plan includes eleven specific components; each to be described here or has been described in a previous Chapter. If the component was described earlier we will provide a brief summary, and reference to the Chapter description.

Specific Components of the Master Plan	
1. Philosophy statement	7. District time line
2. Definition	8. Resource considerations
3. Goals and objectives	9. Coordination and staffing
4. Identification policies and procedures	10. Professional development
5. Programming commitments and models	11. Evaluation plans
6. Implementation guidelines for schools	

### Flexibility in Decision Making

It is important to insure that the committee recognize that, as you proceed through each step in creating a District Master Plan, all decisions are tentative or working conclusions until the entire plan can be reviewed and tested for consistency. In the fray of planning, certain decisions may well seem appropriate, but later it will become evident that, in view of subsequent decisions, changes will need to be made.

## Philosophy Statement

The District Master Plan should begin with a specific statement of the philosophy of the school district with respect to gifted programming. This establishes the importance of and rationale for programming in the District, and identifies the important ways in which gifted programming is linked with the overall mission and goals of the District. The statement should be concise—probably less than one page. It should also be consistent with contemporary views of quality education, school effectiveness, and the nature of human talents and abilities. You should review and work from the vision statement developed in the preceding Chapter. A philosophy statement should present concisely the District’s basic definitions, beliefs, and commitments regarding gifted programming.

An effective philosophy statement should address three basic issues:

1. What do we mean by giftedness?  
[See Volume I Chapter 7]
2. What does identification mean, and what are its purposes?  
[See Volume I Chapter 8]
3. What kinds of programming responses will be made?  
[See Volume I Chapter 9]

### **A General Sample of A Philosophy Statement for Gifted Programming**

By Giftedness we mean students’ potential to become independent, creatively productive people. Programming is an on-going process, through which we recognize and nurture each student’s potentials. It is intended to create an environment in which we make deliberate efforts to recognize students’ emerging strengths, talents, and interests and then nurture them through appropriate and challenging experiences and activities.

This should lead to modifications of instructional activities and services based on students’ unique characteristics and needs. We affirm that outstanding potentials among students, which may lead to gifted behaviors, create the need for experiences and services extending beyond the regular program, and that such needs should be recognized and met by systematic and deliberate programming in school.

Rather than labeling some individuals as gifted (hence implying that all others are non-gifted) we believe identification should focus on any students’ needs. As a process, it should be positive, dynamic, flexible, inclusive (not exclusive), and on-going. Identification is a process which helps us better to recognize students’ characteristics so we can plan instruction more effectively.

Effective programming is concerned with expanding or enhancing learning opportunities for all students. Developing and fulfilling students’ strengths and talents is accomplished through a wide variety of opportunities and experiences. The regular school program serves as a foundation upon which many activities and options can build, and in many cases must also be augmented through additional opportunities and experiences.

Many Districts find it important and helpful for the Board of Education to formulate and adopt a formal Policy Statement in which the District’s commitments and priorities for gifted programming are stated explicitly. A sample of such a Board Policy Statement is given on the next page.

### **Sample Board Policy Statement**

The School Board affirms the responsibility for providing educational programs which are designed to maximize the development of all of its students. The Board further believes that deliberate and explicit efforts should be made to recognize and nurture students' emerging strengths, talents, and learning potentials in ways that are consistent with their needs for personal fulfillment and the best interests of society.

#### **The Board is committed to these specific efforts:**

- Establishing and supporting an inclusive and contemporary definition of giftedness;
- Enabling and supporting staff involvement in comprehensive planning at the District and School levels, which reflects our commitment to collaborative planning and decision-making by faculty and administration;
- Developing appropriate and flexible procedures for recognizing students' unique strengths, talents, and interests. The district will make systematic and deliberate efforts to recognize and respond to students' potentials for creative, productive accomplishments. These potentials among our students curriculum;
- Developing and supporting a broad range of programming alternatives to encourage or foster the development of giftedness and talents;
- Developing and supporting appropriate professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators, to stimulate innovation and excellence in educational programming;
- Communicating with parents and other community members regarding programming for giftedness and talent development;
- Providing for ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of gifted programming, and implementing improvements as warranted.

### **Definitions**

The Master Plan must include definitions. Your decisions about definitions should be carefully analyzed, thoroughly discussed, and founded on your study of the literature and your efforts to assess the appropriateness of various definitions for your own setting. (For a specific discussion of definitions see Volume I, Chapter 7).

### **Goals and Objectives**

The District Master Plan should identify general goals and objectives for gifted programming. Goals are broad statements of major outcomes or purposes to be attained. They are general statements of the major concerns of programming. Objectives are more specific; they are commitments to particular actions which, when taken as a group, will lead to the attainment of the goals that were stated. Each broad goal statement should be accompanied by one or more specific objectives.

The most effective approach to formulating goals and objectives for gifted programming emphasizes the intended outcomes and benefits for: *students, staff, institutional and process, and community*. The goals and objectives should arise from your District vision statement and philosophy statements. An example for each category is given on this page.

**Student Outcomes.** These should draw upon and be interconnected with content, and the new “Workplace Basics” etc. (Volume 1, Chapter 6)

**Goal.** To foster productive thinking among our students.

**Objective.** Students will demonstrate proficiency in creative and critical thinking (as evidenced by pre-post test gains in appropriate creative and critical thinking assessments).

**Staff Outcomes.** This category of outcomes involves opportunities for continuing personal and professional growth for staff members.

**Goal.** To promote staff involvement in curriculum planning and revision.

**Objective.** Teachers will create and carry out (individually or in groups) curriculum modifications or innovation projects that will result in new materials for classroom use.

**Institutional and Process Outcomes.** Institutional outcomes should relate to school improvement goals and objectives. Process Outcomes should target ways of making decisions, ways of monitoring school improvement and programming goals, and strategies for effective teamwork.

**Goal.** To improve school management team decision-making processes.

**Objective.** Members of the school management team will learn and use structured group decision making techniques.

**Community Outcomes.** Community outcomes focus on active participation, life long learning, and collaboration between the school and community agencies or organizations.

**Goal.** To increase opportunities for local businesses to communicate with, and participate in, the schools.

**Objective.** Local businesses are involved in the school program through visitations, shadowing, internship, or mentorship experience.

## **Identification Policies and Procedures**

The goal of this component of the District Master Plan is to communicate the identification rationale, policies, and procedures. These must be flexible, diagnostic and ongoing, with a goal of creating and sustaining opportunities for nurturing students’ potentials. (See Volume I, Chapter 8 for a discussion of identification.)

From a District standpoint, it is important to let individual schools know they have the flexibility they need in order to look for all students’ strengths and talents. From a school standpoint, it is important to let parents and teachers know that many different strengths, talents, and interests will be identified, so the programming offered will vary from student to student.

## **Programming Commitments and Models**

The District Master Plan should contain a menu of programming options and opportunities. Consider the unique dimensions of your setting, and the potential positive or negative impact of such factors on the applicability and usefulness of various models, and build your approach following the most appropriate models. If you are unclear about programming considerations, review Volume I, Chapter 9 of these Guidelines.

## **Implementation Guidelines**

While each Building's Plan of Action will reflect the unique structure and concerns of that school and its administration, staff, students, and community, there is also a need to insure a degree of consistency or comparability by creating a clear set of guidelines for schools to follow in creating their Plan of Action. It will also be supported by insuring that each Building is represented on the District Committee, so that the District Committee's thinking can be communicated and discussed in Building meetings. District committee efforts can support and enhance subsequent planning at the school level, in a number of ways, including:

- Communicating with all schools to promote awareness.
- Sharing the district Committee's efforts to develop philosophy and policy statements.
- Sharing information obtained from the District Committee's study of definitions, identification and programming models.
- Initiating systematic needs assessment among the staff to determine areas in which additional information or inservice may be needed.
- Creating opportunities for careful discussion of both the district's proposed Master Plan and the criteria for reviewing the Building's Plan of Action.
- Developing and sharing a time line giving dates for the start-up of various aspects of the program.
- Disseminating information regarding conferences, workshops, site visits, and other study opportunities or resources which may be available to all interested staff members.
- Sharing policies and plans for program resources and support, and information about possible funding opportunities (grants, special projects, or other sources).
- Identifying resource or contact people in each building.

## **Time Line**

The entire planning process requires time. There are no quick fixes, nor any simple, pre-packaged or ready-made programs for instant adoption. In many ways an effective planning process represents an on-going commitment, characterized by continuous efforts to review, innovate, revise, and improve.

The District Planning Committee will probably spend from six to twelve months in the initial development of the Master Plan. Extensive review and discussion among staff, administrators, and the School Board may also require additional time. While each school's informal planning may occur simultaneously with the development of the Master Plan at the District level, the development of the more comprehensive Building Plan of Action may require at least another year after the guidelines have been provided through the District Master Plan. Time will also be required for the development and implementation of flexible, diagnostic identification

procedures, and the gradual expansion of services to pupils. In addition, there will also need to be careful consideration of the time needed for inservice or professional development.

A sample of a general three year time line is summarized on page 85. Within any school, while the planning process is underway, many staff members may be highly motivated and eager to initiate direct services for students. With this in mind, some suggestions regarding the sequence or time line for such efforts seem warranted:

1. Take actions which will support and extend existing programming positives.
2. In considering the Wish List, begin with the modifications that are easiest, least disruptive of scheduling and resources, and for which there are champions within the group (i.e., individuals or groups who are eager to take ownership for them);

<b>Year One</b>	<b>Year Two</b>	<b>Year Three</b>
<p>A. Organize the District Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish general goals and purposes</li> <li>Provide overview of planning model</li> <li>Define tasks for the Committee</li> </ul>	<p>A. District Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review Building Action Plans and give feedback</li> <li>Plan and conduct inservice</li> <li>Institute resource recommendations (budget, staffing)</li> <li>Initiate design and data collection for evaluation</li> <li>Exchange Building Action Plans, discuss together</li> <li>Monitor Building Action Plans               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consistent with Master Plan</li> <li>Verify that action occurs</li> </ul> </li> <li>Seek new directions, new resources               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trouble shooting and problem solving as needed; new questions</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>A. District Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand linkages with other areas of involvement               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School improvement</li> <li>Professional development</li> <li>Curriculum development</li> <li>Special curriculum areas</li> <li>Counseling, pupil services</li> <li>Community resources</li> </ul> </li> <li>Expand or revise Master Plan</li> <li>Monitor Building Plans</li> <li>On-going review, recommendations regarding resources and budget</li> <li>Trouble shooting, problem solving</li> <li>Evaluation support</li> <li>Encouragement of new services</li> </ul>
<p>B. Preliminary data-gathering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Within District</li> <li>From outside sources</li> <li>State consultant input</li> <li>Attend conferences, workshops</li> <li>Consultant input</li> <li>Visit model programs</li> </ul>	<p>B. Building Committees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Draft Action Plans</li> <li>Input from staff</li> <li>Submit Plan to District Committee</li> <li>Initiate actions               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff awareness</li> <li>Programming positives, wish lists</li> <li>Initial implementation decisions</li> <li>Identify inservice needs, targets</li> </ul> </li> <li>Continuing input and discussion with District Committee</li> <li>Participate actively in evaluation efforts</li> <li>Consider opportunities for innovation</li> <li>Initiate gifted education programming on a pilot basis.</li> </ul>	<p>B. Building Committees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review, revise Building Plans</li> <li>Expand programming positives</li> <li>Expand work on wish list priorities</li> <li>Begin problem solving on wish list</li> <li>Review, modify Action Plans</li> <li>Continuing professional development</li> <li>Link gifted programming with other services</li> <li>Evaluate pilot programming activities and modify as warranted.</li> <li>On-going participation in evaluation, other District activities</li> <li>Publicity and communication activities               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brochures, newsletters</li> <li>Communications with parents and community</li> </ul> </li> <li>Monitor articulation among schools.</li> </ul>
C. Read, observe, study, reflect, compare, analyze		
D. Draft Master Plan for District		
<p>E. Obtain input, reactions to Master Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff, through awareness, review, discussion</li> <li>External review</li> </ul>		
F. Present Master Plan to Board		
G. Community awareness and information activities		
<p>H. Formulate the “charge” to each Building</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organize Building Committees</li> <li>Begin preliminary tasks</li> <li>Start work on Building Action Plans</li> </ul>		
I. Formulate criteria and process for review of Building Action Plans		

3. Begin by seeking modifications or enhancements of the school program that will benefit the greatest number of students (a good strategy both philosophically, and from the standpoint of marketing your program to the parents and the community);
4. Start with modifications for which you have the most expertise. For example, if no one in the building has ever run a mentor program, it is not likely the kind of program to begin as your first effort.

### **Resource Considerations**

It is very important to determine what resources will be available for gifted programming, at the District level and for each Building. While programming can begin with very modest resources, the level of support offered by a District in any new programming area is often an indicator of the degree of interest and commitment to the program that exists on the part of the Board and the administration.

The District Committee should be provided with a budget for training (which may include courses, workshops, seminars, or conferences, for example), resources and professional study materials, supplies and services (paper, typing or word processing, and duplication), and program visitations. If consultants are used to provide input to the Committee, resources must be allocated for fees and expenses. The District Committee should not be expected to meet after school or on the personal time of its members; this means that released time or substitute teacher costs will need to be included in determining the resources required for the District Committee to function successfully.

As the District Master Plan emerges, and the criteria for Building Action Plans are established, it will also be necessary to determine the resources which will be available to the school planning committees. Their expenses may involve many of the same general categories as those of the District Committee, although they may benefit from the experiences and resources of the District Committee (and may also have opportunities to take advantage of some resources initially obtained from the District Committee's resources). Additional questions will arise at the Building planning level. These include determining what resources, if any, will be made directly available to the Buildings for planning, for inservice, or for direct services to students, and how those resources will be allocated. Will each Building receive resources on the basis of head count or pupil enrollment? Or by teacher units, with support for a part or full-time staff person in the school? Or on the basis of projects or proposals they have developed?

Even though budgets may need to be formulated and approved one year at a time, long-term projections of resource requirements will help the District to analyze and prepare for its needs more effectively than is possible if each year's budget request is a surprise. General commitment to supporting the development of gifted programming may also be more likely if the long-range costs and needs have been anticipated thoughtfully.

Specific resource commitments will also need to be made for professional development for teachers and for expanding and extending each school's regular program (combining, for example, elements of the six indicators of a healthy school which were discussed in Volume I,

Chapter 9). It will be important for the District to acknowledge the efforts of the staff and to provide resources to support the efforts of those who will actually carry out programming on a day-to-day basis.

### **Coordination and Staffing**

The District Master Plan should also consider the need for trained personnel to coordinate programming, on both the district wide level and in each building. Effective programming is more likely to result in Districts in which there is a professional commitment to searching for, selecting, and supporting staff members who have (or who are willing to pursue) appropriate advanced training in Gifted Education. A District Coordinator can bring experience and knowledge of relevant theory and research to the work of the District Committee, and can also support the efforts made by each school. In addition, the District Committee needs to work closely with the schools as they develop their own Action Plans, to assist them in determining their staffing needs and in designing strategies for meeting those needs in coordination with other buildings.

### **Professional Development**

Professional development and its implications for the District Master Plan were discussed in this Volume, Chapter 4.

### **Evaluation**

Evaluation should be a natural process that enables programs to be modified and made more effective. Evaluation will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 8 of this Volume.

## **The District's Master Plan: Uses and Format**

A comprehensive, written Plan represents the culmination of appropriately six to twelve months of study and cooperative efforts by the Committee. The written plan will be important to all Board members, administrators, and staff members; each of these target audiences will have specific needs and concerns which should be considered. These include:

<b>Target Audience</b>	<b>Needs and Concerns</b>	<b>Implications for Master Plan</b>
School Board	Policy and budget input for them to consider.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information regarding the importance of and need for gifted programming.</li> <li>• Resources needed for programming.</li> <li>• Implications for staffing.</li> <li>• Timeline.</li> </ul>
District Administration	Foundation for effective administrative management of policies, procedures, and resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specify District functions.</li> <li>• Specify schools' responsibilities.</li> <li>• Procedures for monitoring and evaluating.</li> <li>• Administrative and staff duties.</li> <li>• Criteria for reviewing School Action Plans.</li> <li>• Resource needs and Timeline.</li> <li>• Professional Development plans.</li> </ul>
Building Administration	Foundation for effective formulation of Action Plan, its implementation, support, and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools' planning responsibilities.</li> <li>• Components of Action Plan.</li> <li>• Review of Action Plan.</li> <li>• Support available and how to obtain.</li> <li>• Evaluation of school's efforts.</li> <li>• Staffing and professional development implications.</li> <li>• Timeline.</li> <li>• Information to answer parent, community questions.</li> </ul>
Staff Members	Awareness of District Policies, Procedures, and Resource commitments; Involvement in planning, implementation, and evaluation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information regarding philosophy, definition, District Master Plan.</li> <li>• Staff roles and responsibilities.</li> <li>• Staff development opportunities.</li> <li>• School planning committee tasks.</li> <li>• Implementation guidelines and resources available.</li> <li>• Evaluation activities.</li> <li>• Information to respond to parent, community, student questions.</li> </ul>

The format and length of the District Master Plan may vary from one district to another, of course. It should be a document which will be read, studied, understood, and used by those concerned with the design, implementation, and evaluation of gifted programming throughout the District. If it is a long document (that is, more than 8 to 10 pages) it would be advisable to prepare one or more “executive summaries,” providing abstracts of the major topics and highlights of specific recommendations which will be of major concern for specific target audiences.

Since the District Master Plan should be reviewed, updated, and revised on an on-going basis, it may be helpful to prepare it with numbered sections and sub-sections, in a loose-leaf format which can easily be modified as changes arise.

Completing the Master Plan is a significant milestone in the path towards effective programming, but it is not the end of the District Committee’s role in gifted programming. Its continuing role will be discussed in Chapter 8.

### **Relationship of District Master Plan and Building Action Plans**

The District Master Plan is the foundation for the Building Action Plans. While each Building Plan should reflect the unique structure and concerns of that school and its administration, staff, students, and community, there is also a need to insure a degree of consistency or comparability on a District wide basis. Balance between these concerns can be attained by creating a clear set of guidelines for Buildings to follow in creating their own Plans. The Master Plan will also support the Building Action Plans by insuring that each Building is represented on the District Planning Committee.

## CHAPTER 7: BUILDING ACTION PLANS

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This Chapter provides guidelines for developing Building Action Plans. Each Building Action Plan should be based generally upon the District's Master Plan, as described in the preceding Chapter. Each school will also take into account its own unique character, culture, resources, and goals in creating its Building Action Plan. The group process considerations described in Chapter 3 of this Volume are also important at the school level, since they influence success in working together to develop and carry out the Action Plan.

### **Creating and Implementing the Building Action Plans**

The District Master plan provides a framework or umbrella to guide each school in its planning. Working within these general parameters, each Building should be charged with creating its own Action Plan. This Plan will address several major questions:

- What are we already doing to challenge our students, and to recognize and nurture their strengths, talents, and sustained interests?
- What should we be doing?
- What needs to be changed, expanded, or added, to help us do the best job possible in this area?

The Plan of Action should be developed by the staff, or a Planning Committee of the staff, including any who are also members of the District Planning Committee. In the Action Plan, the committee should consider their Building's staff (talents, interests, resources), and the instructional program's strengths, activities, and resources (considering, for example use or redistribution of existing resources as well as requests for new resources).

### **Informal, Preliminary Steps**

In the previous Chapters in this Volume, several important tasks were identified to be considered as each school begins its planning. These steps were:

- Informal brainstorming among the staff, to consider existing services (Programming Positives). This initial step helps staff members to realize that constructive services are already being provided, so that the task of planning for gifted programming is one of expanding and developing existing commitments, not something new or foreign to educators. (Remember to defer judgment during this phase of planning.)

Pose such questions as, "What kinds of activities already occur in our school to challenge students, to extend their learning, or to spark their interests and curiosity? What do we do to stretch our students and expand their talents?" Consider *any* activities: schoolwide, by grade level or subject area, or special projects conducted by one or more teachers. Include consideration of clubs, special areas, community service projects, or any other major commitments in which the staff and students are involved.

This step will help you to build involvement among staff members in the planning process. It is wise to begin by recognizing your present efforts and accomplishments, rather than viewing the task as correcting all the things you're doing wrong or not doing at all. It is also important to begin with the positives, since these are activities and services which should not be overlooked in the planning process, and which should receive continuing support if they are to be sustained!

- Next, brainstorm a separate Wish List asking, "How might we...increase/expand what we do to "stretch" our students or bring out their best learning potentials, talents, sustained interests?" (Once again, remember to defer judgment while brainstorming!)

After considering what's already in place, turn to the areas which you wish could be created or expanded. Approach this task from the standpoint of wishing and visioning rather than merely as a complaint session. To accomplish this, pose such questions as: "What are some of the services you wish could be expanded? What are we only doing in a small way, that you wish could be expanded? What are some things we haven't done that you wish we could try? What are some new directions we might explore?" At this point it is important to recognize similarities in the lists. We all want the best for our students, and it is refreshing and healthy to bring the recognition of this factor out. This will help to create a positive mental set before continuing.

- Sort the Wish List into two categories: those goals which can readily be accomplished, and those goals which will require more extensive planning and problem solving to attain. This can service as a practical starting point for developing the Building's Action Plan.

The existence of the Wish List will not help you if nothing happens after the list has been produced. If the list lingers without action towards implementation of any of the items on it, there will be problems of morale and lack of motivation among the staff. To initiate action in a constructive way, begin with the items from the list that can most readily be implemented. Provide the means and support for an individual or team to begin working on them. Set a time frame for them to report on their progress to the entire staff. For the more difficult challenge on the list, create opportunities for groups to begin working together, possibly as a staff development project, for example, to solve the problems involved. Feed these efforts and goals into the planning process with the committee working on the School Plan of Action.

**Remember to use affirmative judgment during all sorting and analyzing of ideas!**

The initial brainstorming tasks can be accomplished easily in a faculty meeting. In addition to the benefits of working on the tasks themselves, the staff response can also be helpful to identify prospective members of the school's planning committee. The brainstorming tasks can be initiated simultaneously with on-going planning at the District, and will certainly contribute to the discussions and work that take place at that level.

Some suggestions for carrying out these first steps successfully:

- **Involve everyone on the staff.** Include non-teaching staff and para-professionals to get input from many different sources.
- **Write down everyone's ideas.** Do not criticize or praise any of the ideas, and do not stop for long explanations, discussions, or justifications.
- **Include every idea.** Invite any ideas they have, without holding back or censoring any of their thoughts. The ideas can be analyzed carefully as the planning process continues.
- **Keep the lists.** They will be useful in your follow-up efforts.
- **Recognize the positives.** Many faculties are quite surprised when they look at the results, especially for the "programming positives" list. A typical reaction is, "I never realized that we were involved in so many different things!" You might consider using your list to develop a catalog or brochure, for your own reference and for parent information or publicity purposes, describing the range of activities and services which are offered every year throughout your school.

## **Components of the Building Action Plan**

There are fourteen important components for each school to include in its Action Plan. Each of these components should be reviewed and discussed thoroughly by the building level planning committee, or by the entire staff. This effort should parallel and build upon the District planning tasks, and a representative from each school should be able to keep the school planning committee informed as to the District Committee's progress and decisions. At the school level, the development of the Plan of Action may require at least six to 12 months of careful planning and hard work. The fourteen major components to be addressed in the Plan of Action will be presented separately on the following pages, along with *sample questions* to illustrate the kinds of discussion that will be helpful for each.

### **Rational, Model(s), Benefits of the Proposed Programming Approach**

What approach appears best suited to the particular needs and goals of the school? How were decisions made concerning your approach? Has the approach being considered been used successfully in other similar settings?

### **Establish Fit between District Philosophy, Definition, and Goals and the School's Plan**

What decisions have been made at the District level regarding philosophy, definition, and broad goals for programming? What impact do those decisions have on our school? In what ways might we best reflect District commitments in our plan?

### **Definitions of Key Terms in the Plan**

What technical terms from gifted education are we using? What do they mean? How can we explain them to our staff, students, and parents?

**What unique elements of the school's culture, mission, or values have been considered in designing the Plan? How are they reflected in proposed actions or responses?**

What are the established operations in our school – the expectations, traditions, rituals, and rewards which everyone comes to know and expect? What is the climate like? How do we feel about being here, about the way we operate, or about each other? How is our culture and climate reflected in our wish lists? How might our Plan of Action reflect our best understanding of who we are and what we hope to accomplish together?

**How will students' characteristics and needs be assessed?**

In what ways might we search deliberately for students' strengths, talents, and sustained interests? How might we increase our ability to recognize and respond to our students' unique characteristics and needs? What steps can we take to avoid merely labeling or categorizing our students?

**How does the regular school program insure challenge, recognize diversity, and offer opportunities for student productivity?**

What programming positives describe the areas in which we are already doing well to challenge our students and to build on their talents and interests? Do we balance concern for remediation and deficiencies with efforts to locate students' strengths?

**How will regular school programs be extended, enhanced, or expanded?**

What are the items on our Wish List towards which we are already making new or expanded efforts? What initial steps have we taken to address the difficult areas of the Wish List? What are some changes, expanded services, increased activities, or innovations we will attempt to bring about through gifted programming? How will these efforts be linked to other components of our on-going commitment to quality instruction and school improvement?

**Who will be involved in programming, and in what ways?**

What will be the role of classroom teachers, and administrator's in implementing our Action Plan? Who else will be involved? Will staff members be available to work with other staff members and students to facilitate the development and implementation of new services and activities? How will faculty members be supported in efforts to improve planning, student diagnosis, and delivery of instruction? What age or grade levels will be involved? In what subject or program areas will students be involved in programming?

**What inservice or staff development efforts will be undertaken to support the plan?**

What new skills, resources, or methods and techniques will be needed to carry out our Action Plan? How will we ensure that these will be available, and staff will learn how to use them effectively? What training opportunities will be needed to insure the staff's competence and

commitment, and how will those opportunities be provided? How will their impact be determined?

### **What resource and budget implications are involved?**

What school resources will be involved in carrying out the Building's Action Plan? What new resources will be required? From what outside sources might additional resources (financial? people? materials?) be obtained, and how? What are the long-range resource implications? If this project is begun, what resources will be required to insure its successful completion?

### **What is the school's time line for implementation?**

When will the school begin to implement the Action Plan? When will it be reviewed and evaluated? When will modifications be considered? How long will be required for each component of the Plan of Action to be initiated and fully implemented?

### **How does the Plan relate to other projects or programs for school improvement or enhanced effectiveness?**

Is there a school effectiveness or school improvement project in the school? If so, how will the gifted programming Action Plan be related to it? If not, will such a project or plan be developed, and how will gifted programming be involved in that effort? Gifted programming, considered in a contemporary way, is not an isolated or "stand alone" concern. It can and should be related to many other important planning efforts within the school. *Suggestion:* Go on an "Advance" together (we don't talk about "Retreats!") for staff to set a "vision" and develop a 3-5 year school plan.

### **What aspects of the plan are unique or innovative?**

In the Action Plan, what is being proposed that will be new and different for the school? What proposals are extensions or refinements of existing activities or services? How will the Plan of Action contribute to the school's overall progress or "forward motion" towards continuous instructional improvement?

### **What is the proposed evaluation plan?**

What specific plans and commitments have been made to evaluate the school's Action Plan and its implementation? What criteria will be used to document the effectiveness or impact of the components or activities in the Action Plan? How will evaluation data be used to refine or modify the programming efforts?

## **Implementation of Effective Programming**

The following four general suggestions will help enhance the likelihood of your success in implementing programming at the school or building level.

**1. Phase in programming “action” gradually, beginning with services for many or all students, then expanding to more complex services.** Action at the individual school level should be initiated *gradually*, and should begin with consideration of several important directions that involve many (or all!) students and staff. Examples of activities or services for many students, readily incorporated into any school’s program, include:

- **Thinking Skills for all students.** A wide variety of programs and resources is now available to guide educators in their efforts to promote higher level, productive thinking among all students. Costa’s (1986) *Developing Minds* is a useful collection of brief descriptions of many such programs. *Creative Thinking and Problem Solving in Gifted Education* (Feldhusen and Treffinger, 1985) provides descriptions of published resources emphasizing creative thinking and problem solving in many content areas. *Reach Each You Teach II* (Treffinger, Hohn & Feldhusen, 1990) is a practical guide for helping teachers design units using higher level thinking processes.
- **Consider participation in programs which offer motivating opportunities for students’ creativity, imagination, and inquiry skills to be expressed and developed.** Examples include such programs as the Invent America or Invention Convention programs, Future Problem Solving, or Odyssey of the Mind (OM) programs. [A word of caution: Be certain to control undue pressure on winning; the programs are designed to promote learning and creative problem solving, not just winning teams.]
- **Undertake systematic efforts to learn about student differences, such as methods for recognizing and responding to students’ learning styles.** There are many practical resources for both adults and students to learn more about learning styles and preferences. Examples include *Teaching Students Through Their Individual Learning Styles* (Dunn and Dunn, 1978), or *Bringing Out the Giftedness in Your Child* (Dunn, Dunn, and Treffinger, 1992).
- **Examine ways to increase community resource use and involvement.** This may include efforts to develop or expand community resource and mentor programs, involvement of community organizations or businesses in partnership programs, the “Adopt a School” program, and development of “artist in residence” or other similar programs. Parents and parent groups may be effective support systems for the establishment of such efforts on a schoolwide basis.

**2. Establish ways to search for and review new instructional resources and to create and implement new programming opportunities.** Begin to work on several steps of the informal Wish List that was created through the initial, informal brainstorming tasks. Seek many and varied ways to increase the number of kinds of services that are offered – to all students, and, on the basis of students’ particular interests and needs, to individuals and groups. Some examples include:

- Conduct specific activities and make deliberate efforts to notice and respond to students’ interests.
- Create opportunities for “Type I” enrichment (Renzulli, 1977) or “general exploratory activities.” These include a wide range of small or large group activities to offer students opportunities to be exposed to new topics or content, and possibly thus to stimulate their curiosity, imagination, and interest. Type I Enrichment includes such activities as guest

speakers, field trips, and special interest programs or resources. They may be provided on a voluntary attendance basis, by invitation (when students with particular known interest areas, for example, are invited to a special follow-up session with a guest speaker after an introductory program for a larger audience), or by grade level, subject area, or even by individual class participation.

- Help teachers to be alert to opportunities to identify students' special interests, talents, or strengths which may emerge naturally, as an outgrowth of their participation in a unit of study or project in any classroom. That is, within the regular instructional program – when appropriate and challenging learning experiences are offered-individuals or groups of students may identify their own strengths, through the questions they raise, the complex or sophisticated work or projects they do (in response to assignments or on their own), or by declaring their enthusiasm for learning more or digging more deeply into a topic. These natural identification opportunities provide a strong foundation for effective programming responses.

**3. Create opportunities for advanced and higher level instruction.** While programming opportunities that arise naturally, as described in the preceding item, are strong and positive, it is also important for the school to include in its programming deliberate efforts to stimulate those opportunities. Such efforts may be related to on-going inservice for the staff, but they can also include other kinds of direct services to students. For example, these may include:

- Advanced courses, seminars, or independent study for students with exceptional background, proficiency, and interest. Students who participate in such courses should be identified on the basis of their specific background, experiences, interests, and ability in that area, rather than merely selected on the basis of global ability scores or ratings.
- Talent pool sections, such as those proposed by Renzulli and Reis (1986), in which the regular curriculum can effectively be “compacted” or condensed, thus providing opportunities for investigation or more complex issues, themes, and problems. Such sections should not consist merely of “piling on” more or more difficult content to be “covered,” but should provide experiences to help students learn and apply complex thinking, problem solving, and research or inquiry skills.
- After school or summer opportunities for enrichment and advanced study, which may also be undertaken in cooperation with other agencies such as State-sponsored special programs or special programs conducted by colleges and universities.

**4. Respond to individual cases as needs arise.** Gifted programming also challenges the school to respond with flexibility and imagination to meet unique or unusual needs of students as they arise, even though such circumstances may not readily fit the schedule, the way we have always done things in the past, or the ways we treat everyone so as to seem to be fair. Consider asking, “How might we avoid homogenizing students, or treating everyone alike?” There are real differences among peoples' abilities, skills, and interests; several years ago an educational film produced by the Kettering-I/D/E/A Foundation (*The Improbable Form of Master Sturm*) posed the issue this way: “Nothing is more unequal than the equal treatment of unequals.”

The Building's Action Plan should provide clearly for deliberate efforts to recognize and respond appropriately and supportively to the unusual learning needs and characteristics of *any* student. Test scores in themselves do not define a specific learning need from which appropriate instruction can be planned; as such, then, test scores should not be considered a defining criterion or entitlement for advanced services. It is more powerful and productive to examine specific information regarding a student's background, achievement, skills, goals, and interests. Such an investigation may include test data as part of a more complete profile, of course. The questions to be posed should be: "What are the student's actual needs? How might we best provide a response to those needs?"

## CHAPTER 8: QUALITY, INNOVATION, AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

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*Bombarded with fads and passing fancies, teachers (and administrators) find it all too easy to adopt a 'this, too, will pass' mentality. Since meaningful change does not magically appear overnight, constancy of purpose is essential to the long term effort needed for school improvement.*  
-J.L. Patterson, S. Purkey, & J. Parker, *Productive School Systems for a Nonrational World* (1986)

The planning process does not end when the District Master Plan and Building Action Plans have been prepared, nor even when implementation has begun. In this Chapter, we will consider several interrelated issues and concerns that address the sixth stage of the planning process: quality, innovation, and continuous improvement.

How will you determine the quality, effectiveness, or impact of your programming efforts? How will you document whether you have done what you intended and planned to do, and what the results or outcomes of those efforts have been? What components or aspects of your gifted programming and school improvement efforts have been most and least successful? What should be done to sustain exemplary practices, or to modify and improve practices that have not been successful? Most educators will recognize these as questions pertaining to evaluation. Evaluation should provide information that will help us to assess the strengths and weaknesses of any programming effort, and to make judgments about program quality and support. In addition, evaluation should guide future planning. It is important to consider the degree to which innovation is encouraged and supported within the schools-how existing efforts can be improved, and how new efforts will be initiated.

Evaluation of gifted programming is a difficult but important consideration for all Districts and schools. A comprehensive discussion of appropriate methods, procedures, and resources for evaluating gifted programming is beyond the scope of these Guidelines. We will summarize briefly some fundamental considerations.

Evaluating gifted programming may be difficult for several reasons:

1. Complex outcomes, such as those commonly stated for gifted programming, are not easy to measure.
2. The full impact or benefits of gifted programming for students may not be evident immediately.
3. The more effectively you integrate various components of your school program, the more difficult it becomes to isolate the impact of any of those components.
4. The greater the variety of services offered, the more diverse the criteria which would be needed to assess their effectiveness.

Evaluation is not a one shot, one time event; thorough, effective, useful evaluation should be on-going or continuous process of identifying ways to strengthen or improve your efforts. Evaluation should be a natural process that enables programs to be modified and made more effective. The role of the District and Building Level Committees does not end once the initial Master Plan or Building Action Plans have been prepared. Their roles will change in several important ways as they progress from the planning process into actual implementation efforts. In gifted programming and in school improvement, generally speaking, a sense of incompleteness is healthy-recognizing that accomplishing one's goals and attaining excellence in one area of programming is an on-going process. Several specific considerations in effective evaluation are identified in the Chart on page 107.

Area of Concern	Sample Questions	Representative Data	Who Provides Data
District “Master Plan”	Has the Plan been developed? Was it created appropriately? Is the Plan complete? Did appropriate constituents have input and involvement in creating the Plan? Has the Plan been disseminated and reviewed appropriately?	Written plan exists. Survey or interview data from Committee members, staff, administration, Board community. Verification and external review of the Plan.	Committee members Other constituents External reviewers or outside “experts”
Each School’s “Plan of Action”	Has the Plan been developed? Is it complete and appropriate? Does it reflect unique concerns? Is it consistent with District Master Plan? Did appropriate constituents have input and involvement in creating the Plan?	Written Plan exists. Review & approval by staff and District. Survey or interviews with staff and administrator(s).	School staff and administration. District administration. District Coordinator External “expert” audit or review.
Diagnostic Identification Procedures	Do policies and procedures focus on recognizing students’ characteristics, needs, talents, and interests? Do procedures provide for flexibility and inclusiveness? Are procedures applied appropriately? Are student needs being recognized?	Survey, interview data from classroom teachers, catalyst teachers. Direct review of student records.	External evaluator or “auditor” District Coordinator Catalyst Teachers Classroom Teachers Review by outside “experts”
Programming for All Students	Are many activities offered to challenge students, develop student interest, and enrich student learning opportunities? Are students’ unique learning styles recognized and dealt with? Do students demonstrate progress in achievement and in process skills?	Logs of activities (schoolwide; grade level; subject areas); Learning style profiles; Survey, interview, and/or observation data (teachers, students, parents); Student achievement data (teacher/test); Process skills data (teacher/test/products)	Catalyst teachers and District Coordinator; Classroom teachers; School administrators; Students; Parents; External “auditor” review of data.
Programming for Many Students	Do students who demonstrate special interest and involvement in topics have appropriate opportunities for enrichment? Are appropriate options offered? Does “compacting” of regular curriculum and requirements occur? Is there follow-up extend Level One?	Student “profiles” (diagnostic) and “portfolios” (accomplishments); Logs or records of activities; Varied classroom assignments/projects; Documentation of special activities and group programs; Survey, interview, observations.	Catalyst teachers and District Coordinator; Classroom teachers; School administrators; Students; Parents, Community Resource People; External “auditor” review of data.
Programming for Some Students	Are students’ special talents and sustained interests recognized? Are options provided or created to respond? Are responses linked clearly and appropriately to students’ needs and interests? Are student/staff efforts encouraged?	Student “profiles” (diagnostic) and “portfolios” (accomplishments); Logs or records of activities; Documentation of special activities and group programs; Contract or Independent Study records; Survey, interview, observations	Catalyst teachers and District Coordinator; Classroom teachers; School administrators; Students; Parents, Community Resource People; External “auditor” review of data.
Programming for a Few Students	Are opportunities provided for advanced study, acceleration, dual or co-enrollment, early admission or graduation? Are students enabled to progress at their own, appropriate rate and pace? Are Mentorships sought and established? Are other, independent options used?	Student “profiles” (diagnostic) and “portfolios” (accomplishments); Logs or records of activities; Documentation of special activities and group programs; Contract or Independent Study records; Survey, interview, observations	Catalyst teachers and District Coordinator; Classroom teachers; School administrators; Students; Parents, Community Resource People; External “auditor” review of data.

There are many models or approaches to program evaluation. In general, however, we believe there is substantial agreement that effective evaluation involves:

- **Advance Planning.** Plans for evaluation should be made as part of the initial planning process, not after program implementation has already begun. A common error, for example, is to defer consideration of evaluation until it is too late to gather appropriate pre-test or “baseline” data upon which later assessments of change or growth may depend.
- **Agreement on the Purposes to be Served.** The purposes and need for evaluation of programming efforts should be clearly understood by everyone involved, before the evaluation process begins.
- **Recognition of the Varying Needs of Different “Stakeholders.”** While there may be many questions of common interest or concern to all who will be involved in the evaluation process, certain objectives of the evaluation, and the kinds of data needed to assess them, may vary or be quite unique from one target audience to another. That is, the questions and concerns of parents, administrators, Board members, and staff members may differ, and may also involve different kinds of evidence or documentation. These differences should be taken into account when planning the evaluation.
- **Clear Goals and Well-Defined Objectives.** In order to facilitate effective and useful evaluation, the goals and objectives for programming should be stated as clearly as possible, in terms that make clear the kinds of data (or evidence) that will permit them to be assessed.
- **Specific Recommendations.** The evaluation effort should result in specific recommendations regarding modifications or revisions of support, action, or content of programming that will enhance program effectiveness. Good evaluation effort lead to improvement planning and decision-making.
- **Both Qualitative and Quantitative Data Are Valuable.** Evaluation of complex outcomes that are typical of gifted programming cannot be accomplished solely by the use of standardized achievement tests or other strictly quantitative data and test scores. Effective evaluation documents the real activities and accomplishments of students. Test data may be *one* valuable component of program evaluation, but they are not likely to be the *only* data, and in many cases, they will not even be the primary data for evaluation. For example, a 15% increase in students’ fluency scores may be impressive to some people, while actual evidence of students’ applications, such as solving problems at home or in school, may be much more important and impressive for many others.
- **An Outside Evaluator, Whenever Possible.** Although there may be less consensus in the field of educational evaluation regarding this subject, many specialists agree that an outside evaluator, who will be more likely to be objective and impartial than an in house evaluator, can offer very important insights and recommendations.
- **Authentic Tasks and Authentic Assessment.** As we begin to focus more and more on creating tasks or learning experiences that relate instructional content to the ways it will be used or applied in real world contexts (authentic tasks), we also face the need for new ways of assessing students’ attainment of those outcomes. As a result, there has also been growing interest in authentic assessment, including non-test demonstrations of performance by individuals or groups on real or realistic tasks, open-ended project evaluation, and documentation of student outcomes using a portfolio approach.

## Indicators of Quality in Programming

How can you determine whether your programming efforts meet or exceed reasonable standards of quality? In areas as complex as teaching and learning, and serving as diverse an array of stakeholders as schools must, it can be very difficult, indeed, to respond with confidence to this question. The search for an appropriate response that can be defended on the basis of research and theory as well as logic and personal values will probably begin by examining the school's results and outcomes in relation to its stated vision, mission, goals, and objectives. No universal agreement has been attained regarding how to compare or evaluate a school's selection of goals. In addition, it is often exceedingly difficult to attach specific performance standards or criteria to many of the goals we consider important, especially more complex outcomes at higher cognitive (e.g., productive thinking, creativity, and problem solving) or affective levels (e.g., resourcefulness, love of learning, self-management). A school's on-going analysis, review, and evaluation of its efforts should always seek ways, both quantitatively and qualitatively, to document the goals it holds important, and not to permit evaluation to be reduced only to the level at which the most easily-measured outcomes (e.g., memorization and recall of information) become, by default, its most important outcomes.

Similarly, we recommend caution when using and interpreting standardized achievement test results, especially in relation to school improvement and gifted programming outcomes. Minimum competencies are not necessarily indicators of effectiveness, even for at risk students; schools should not permit minimum competencies to become maximum expectancies for any student. By the same token, high achievement scores are not necessarily indications of successful instruction or appropriate challenge for students. Some students may attain high scores on the basis of what they already knew, prior to instruction, rather than as a reflection of high quality, challenging instruction. In addition, some students who attain very high achievement scores may simply be getting by on what they already know, rather than being challenged to progress to higher or more complex levels.

We must be mindful of the warning issued by Professor Julian Stanley of the Johns Hopkins University that there is more variability in the 99<sup>th</sup> percentile than in the rest of the distribution. That is, when a student's score is at the 99<sup>th</sup> percentile, we only know that the test was not able to tell us about how much beyond its ceiling (if at all) a student might have been able to continue responding successfully. Some students might have reached their limit in the very next group of questions, if there had been another group, whereas others might have continued on successfully through many more complex and challenging levels.

In Volume I of the Guidelines (Chapter 9) six "Indicators of Excellence," with seven criteria for each indicator, were presented as one way of describing the foundation for a successful, challenging instructional program. These indicators and criteria, with a number of classroom examples for each category, are also included in Appendix A of this volume. They provide a useful starting point for self-study of any school's instructional efforts.

## **Innovation and Change**

Effective evaluation can also provide directions and challenge for innovation and change, identifying significant areas of need or opportunity for new activities or services. In Volume I (Chapters three through six), many of today's pressures for innovation and change were discussed briefly. In order to be prepared to be effective in dealing with or managing change, educators, administrators, and policy-makers in today's schools must be prepared to gather data from many sources and to use those data to monitor and revise their present policies and actions. It is no longer possible in today's world to assume that curriculum, instructional methods and resources, or the characteristics, needs, and interests of students will remain static for long periods of time. Effective schools are those in which people work to establish and maintain relatively short cycles of response to change (that is, create and apply flexible, responsive modes of action to effect change without long delays for review, analysis and reanalysis, and approval).

## **Continuous Improvement**

Obviously, no programming efforts are every perfect; there is always room for improvement. Can our efforts ever be completely free of any error? "Zero defects" is often discussed as a goal, for example, in the world of business or manufacturing. How many defective products can emerge from a factory before the owners and workers conclude that performance is unsatisfactory? (Is one in a thousand too many—or too demanding a standard? Would your response be different if you knew that the one defective product in a thousand would be the one you purchase?) If we set our standards as high as possible, toward the ultimate goal of zero defects, we will then be challenged to be constantly alert to new ways to improve and do things better—our goal, and our standard operating procedure, will focus on continuous improvement, rather than on "just good enough."

To be sure, educating children and youth is much more complex challenge than mass-producing widgets, and it is often must more difficult to know what a "defect" represents. The better we become at defining the outcomes we consider essential for every student, the better we will be able to determine whether or not we have been successful. In the same sense as for the manufacturer, the zero defect principle is a worthwhile challenge for educators, in that it encourages us to accept the goal of continuous improvement. We must always be examining our policies, practices, and results in order to be alert for better ways to recognize and develop students' strengths, talents, and sustained interests and to insure their competence, confidence, and commitment as learners.

Similarly, school improvement is a continuous process, in which you are always seeking ways to enhance all aspects of your school's operation and services. We have never heard of a "New, Improved School!" (with a special, patented secrete ingredient) – but we do encourage schools to think of themselves as continuously improving institutions.

Continuous improvement is not only a matter of finding things that are insufficient, wrong, inadequate, or deficient; it is not just fixing up something that is damaged or not working right. It will be just as important – and undoubtedly much more satisfying and renewing – to keep in mind that every good school always seeks ways to become better. Thus, as some important goals

are attained, new ones emerge. As innovation occurs within a school, a climate is established in which more new ideas can be encouraged in the future. Growth must be planned and well-managed, to be sure, to avoid a helter skelter approach in which nothing seems stable for very long. But at the same time, it is also necessary to avoid the dangers of complacency, failure to examine carefully the strengths and weaknesses of the program over time, or rigidity in the face of changing circumstances and needs.

You should also give careful consideration to the continuing role and responsibilities of both the District planning committee and Building planning committees after the initial completion of written plans. These continuing tasks have been grouped into four general categories: preparation for implementation (the start up phase); implementation and management; evaluation and long-range planning; and, communication and school-community relations.

## **Preparation for Implementation**

After the Master Plan has been drafted by the District Committee, it should be reviewed thoroughly and adopted explicitly by the District. To prepare for implementation of the Master Plan, the next group of tasks involves promoting and supporting school or building level planning effort, supporting resource development and allocation; sharing, discussing, and updating the Buildings' Action Plans; considering resources needed and resource allocations; and stimulating staff development opportunities.

**Promote and Support Building Efforts.** The District Committee should assist and support the efforts of each school to create its own Plan of Action. Since the District Committee's membership should include representatives from each building, and since staff members should have opportunities to review and offer input to the final form of the Master Plan, coordination of building Plans within the parameters established by the District Master Plan should not be difficult. Each school's Plan of Action may be reviewed by the District Committee, however, to offer feedback and constructive suggestions, and to promote effective communication and coordination at the District level.

The District Committee's support for building level efforts should also extend into programming opportunities. For example, if special opportunities arise to bring unique resource persons or groups (e.g., artist or writer in residence, performing arts groups, etc.) to the District, it may be more efficient to coordinate arrangements and to schedule individual building visits through the District level than through each building acting independently. It may also be possible at the District level to help increase all schools' awareness of such opportunities.

**Sharing, Discussing, and Updating the Buildings' Action Plans.** The Action Plan for each school is not a static, fixed document, but rather a flexible, dynamic plan that should be examined as an on-going process. It is essential for the school's staff to have regular opportunities for input regarding the plan's implementation and growth. It can also be valuable to share the plan with parents and community members, so they will be knowledgeable about the school's programming philosophy and practices and to invite their contributions to carrying out the plan where appropriate. The building level Action Plans should also be reviewed and

discussed regularly by the District Committee, to support program development as well as for the purposes of monitoring or evaluating program implementation and outcomes.

**Resource Development and Allocation.** The District Committee can continue to play an active role through coordinating and reviewing resource requests from each building, synthesizing individual school requests into an overall fiscal plan or proposal for gifted programming, promoting cooperative or shared use of certain resources among buildings, and preparing proposals for grants for various aspects of gifted programming within the District.

The Committee should also serve as a conduit of professional resources and information for all staff members, through such services as: subscribing to and circulating appropriate magazines and professional journals, circulating information about conferences, workshops, or graduate study opportunities, or promoting opportunities for visitations to other programs or participation in networking or consortium activities within the local area, state, or region.

The District Committee's role in reviewing school Action Plans includes considering the resources which will be required to implement those plans and offering feedback regarding possible sources for the needed resources.

**Stimulating Staff Development Opportunities.** Another important continuing role for the District Planning Committee involves planning, organizing, or conducting inservice or staff development opportunities. The Committee can provide leadership within the District to insure that provisions are made within existing professional development programs to help staff members throughout the District to increase their confidence and proficiency in recognizing the unique characteristics, needs, and interests of capable students. The Committee can also initiate new directions for inservice, or promote and enhance innovative staff development approaches that are already in place, to help support the District's overall efforts to apply contemporary principles and evidence regarding professional development (e.g., Joyce, 1980; Joyce & Showers, 1983; *Gifted Child Quarterly*, Summer 1986).

Inservice or staff development within any building, or on a District-wide basis, should be designed to provide all staff members with new ideas and information; to be effective, however, it must also help the staff to use, practice, and modify in their own setting what they have learned in the inservice programs. This can also help to convey the importance of ownership of gifted programming by the whole staff (so gifted programming is not simply regarded as "what someone else does to certain students"). It also reinforces an important principle: nurturing students' strengths and talents calls for methods, techniques, or strategies that can and should be employed in the regular classroom, not just in a separate setting.

## **Implementation and Management**

The second set of continuing tasks involve the actions that are important for successful implementation of the Master Plan and each building's specific Action Plan, as well as tasks relating to effective management of programming.

**Diagnostic Assessment of Student Characteristics and Needs.** The building planning committee, or a sub-committee of it, can also perform a valuable service by functioning as a diagnostic or child study team, supporting the school's efforts to look closely at the unique characteristics, strengths, talents, and sustained interests of students. They may conduct detailed case studies in certain cases, or facilitate planning and use of student profiles, in order to best determine students' needs and to define appropriate responses. Many schools already have Child Study Teams or screening procedures in one form or another, but these are usually occupied almost completely with cases in which the main emphasis is on remediation, deficiencies, or learning problems. The building committee's role in gifted programming is to insure that there are also specific efforts made to recognize and plan for students' strengths, talents, and sustained interests. This task involves studying carefully any students whose history and status suggests difficulty in understanding the child's needs or special conditions, such as great variations in performance in different subject areas or difficult circumstances at home or in school. In such cases, the student's learning may best be promoted through input and discussion by *several* staff members. The District Committee's efforts can stimulate discussion of options or alternatives, as well as sharing of successful practices, among the buildings, and can also address the issues of time and resources needed for diagnostic assessment to be undertaken at the building level.

**Sustain programming positives.** In the initial planning at the building level, one task was to identify, in an open-ended or brainstorming mode, a variety of activities and services already being used in the school to extend, enhance, or enrich learning opportunities for students; the items on this list have been described as the school's *programming positives*. That is, these are activities that contribute to the goals and purposes of gifted programming **and** are already in place in the school. Sustaining and supporting these activities is an important on-going task for each building. Sharing successful practices and seeking support for the buildings' initiatives are related tasks for the District Committee.

**Extended Enrichment Opportunities for Many Students.** Renzulli and Reis (1985), in the *Schoolwide Enrichment Model*, advocated that effective programming at the building level incorporates many opportunities for students to explore ideas, topics, and issues that are independent of the regular curriculum (Type I Enrichment) and systematic efforts to guide students in learning and applying methodological and process skills (or Type II Enrichment). They recommended that schools establish a committee to identify topics and to plan and conduct such enrichment activities; this can be viewed as an important task for the building committee. At the District level, efforts can be made to coordinate planning for outside resource people, on a District-wide basis. This may involve pooling resources from several buildings to enable them to bring in an outside program, for example, or coordinating scheduling of community resources so that schools need not compete separately for the time and services of individuals who may be in high demand.

**Solving Problems and Stimulating Innovation.** The building committee should also examine carefully the Wish Lists that were created in their initial planning stages, to identify priorities for future efforts. These lists include activities and services that will help the school to expand and diversify the services it offers to students. The committee should work together to identify the highest priorities among these items, and to plan ways to accomplish them. This will call on the committee to put their own problem solving and decision-making skills to use! Some items in the

Wish List may be readily attainable, not having been created before only because they were not previously identified as a need or concern. These can probably be implemented quite easily through the committee's efforts. Others may represent much more complex or challenging long-term goals, which will require much more extensive time and effort to accomplish.

As the Committee begins working on its wish list, some new projects are likely to emerge, for which a particular group within the school is particularly enthusiastic. In such cases, it may be valuable to capitalize on the concept of the "Skunk Works" in business and industry (Peters and Waterman, 1982) – that is, creating an opportunity for that group to work as a team to implement the new idea or project, in at least a seed or pilot project form, so its effectiveness and potential application on a larger scale can better be understood and evaluated.

The District Committee should also be prepared to engage in problem solving and innovation development, providing opportunities for building representatives to bring forward concerns that should be addressed at the District level, and encouraging the staff to plan and conduct cooperative or experimental projects at more than one site.

**Monitor or Coordinate Implementation.** The balance between autonomy at the school level and continuity or consistency among units within the District can be complex to establish and maintain. While each building may desire to design and conduct programming efforts in its own unique ways, it is valid for the District to seek to insure that policies and procedures do not differ so widely from one school to another that problems are created for students who may move from one school to another, that students are not denied appropriate opportunities by virtue of their enrollment in a particular school, or that students' prior activities and accomplishments are disregarded as they move from one level to another through the school years. Through on-going sharing and discussion of successes, accomplishments, difficulties, concerns, and new opportunities, the District Committee can serve as system through which the needed balance or continuity is maintained and fine tuned.

## **Continuing Evaluation and Long Range Planning**

The third general area of on-going work for the District Committee and the building committees involves the need for careful continuing evaluation, long-range planning, and revision of programming policies and practices.

**Designing Regular Updates or Revisions.** Effective programming is dynamic, not static, and gifted education is a new and rapidly-changing area, in which new developments in theory and research occur frequently. On the plus side, the stimulates many opportunities for school improvement and program refinement; the minus side, of course, is that it can be very difficult to keep up to date without on-going effort and study. For this reason, the Committees must recognize that policies and procedures for gifted programming must be reviewed regularly. Both District Master Plan and each of the Building Action Plans should be viewed as flexible and open to continuous efforts at improvement, rather than fixed and permanent in the form in which they were originally created. This calls for on-going investigation of new trends and direction in the field, discussion of many alternatives for program growth, and time and effort devoted to

long-range planning and the establishment of both district wide and building level priorities and goals.

**Continuing Evaluation Efforts.** The evaluation process, which we have already described as an on-going process not a one-time action, also requires continuing planning, coordination, and support at both the District and Building levels.

**Long Range Planning.** The challenges of change and continuous improvement suggest that the planning committees should give serious consideration to planning over a three to five year period. These efforts should be on-going, so that planning will be deliberate and systematic rather than haphazard. When program development or change represents a hurried set of decisions, made under the pressure of crises (real or imaginary), the results are not likely to be very satisfactory to anyone for very long.

## **Communication and School – Community Relations**

The fourth general area of continuing responsibility for the committees involves efforts to inform, educate, and communicate with the public, and to disseminate the accomplishments and successes of the District's or school's programming efforts.

**Answering Questions.** There will always be many, varied, and unusual questions from community members and parents, as well as from staff members who were not directly involved in the initial program planning efforts. There will be some, for example, who will want to know more about District or Building level policies and procedures in general, or to compare them with other programs they may have heard or read about elsewhere. These questions may arise from a general curiosity or interest, from concerns for proceeding in the best possible manner, or by virtue of people's concern for and interest in their own children's educational services or programs.

Such questions are important and valid, and deserve honest and informed responses. When there are concerns about one District's policies and procedures compared to what they have heard from other places, or when there are discussions of differences in specific activities from one school to another within a District, it is important that the District and Building level committee members have a common base of information to work with, and that staff and administrators know how to get information, to prevent incorrect information from being given out inadvertently.

**Disseminate Program Accomplishments and Promote Good Public Relations.** All schools should be alert to any opportunities to document their accomplishments and success for members of their community, and to promote positive, cooperative relations within the community. Community members often read, hear, or see only a very small sample of the school's activities and accomplishments – on the positive side, the attainments of winning athletic teams or an annual school dramatic performance, or perhaps the honor roll or features about scholarship or award winners, for example. Too often the publicity is neutral, controversial, or even negative – such as budget, construction, or contract issues; publication of achievement test scores and comparisons among Districts (whether or not appropriate); Board election campaigns, or special

issues that arise. The District Committee and each Building Committee can seek opportunities to promote activities and accomplishments, throughout the year, to build awareness of their efforts to recognize and develop the talents and strengths of many students.

There is some disagreement in the literature on the issue of how *visible* gifted programming should be, or in what ways. Those who argue for a high level of visibility for gifted programs feel that visibility is essential to maintain support for funding and staff. Others believe that the accomplishments of many staff and students can be promoted, with less explicit emphasis in the publicity on “the gifted teachers” or “the gifted students.” They believe that the important focus should be on the *activities and accomplishments themselves, not on labels for the participants*. When the time comes for the District’s gifted programming (and budget) to be reviewed, policy makers can be informed that the existence of gifted programming in the District enabled those accomplishments to happen. (If this goes unnoticed, the Committee members will certainly be able to offer a reminder.) When many staff and community members have shared in the activities and the publicity, programming is more likely to gain support; traditional arguments for support for gifted programs often appear to be special purpose requests lacking a broad base of support. Regardless of one’s viewpoint on “visibility,” there is broad agreement that publicity and good public relations efforts are important for successful programming, and must be conducted deliberately, not left to chance.

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## APPENDIX A: INDICATORS OF EXCELLENCE

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### Indicator A: Individualized Basics

This indicator involves matching student abilities with the demands of the curriculum. It includes all modifications made to a student's schooling based on comparing their ability with the basic requirements of the curriculum. There are seven criterion which describe successful school programs in this area.

**Criterion #1** Modifications of instruction are made based upon student's unique characteristics, sustained interests and talent areas.

Mary's 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher realizes Mary's test scores indicate above average ability in vocabulary skills. Mary is pre-tested on spelling words which will be taught this grading period. She scores over 85% correct on the spelling words. As a result, her teacher compacts the regular classwork in this area from Mary's classroom activities. Mary uses this to become involved in more advanced reading material and working on simple science experiments which are of interest to her.

In the 10<sup>th</sup> grade advanced Social Studies class, Brian indicates that he is already quite knowledgeable about the American Revolution. By asking a few questions related to the textbook's chapters on this topic, his teacher recognizes that Brian can be excused from the usual classroom requirements. In place of the regular requirements, Brian contracts with the teacher to conduct a project related to interviewing local history buffs to find out more about the community's role in the Revolution.

**Criterion #2** Learning Activities employ higher level thinking skills (e.g., Bloom's Taxonomy).

An elementary teacher changes the way she asks questions in her class. Beyond recognition and recall questions, her daily routine now includes questions that call for the students to demonstrate productive thinking, predicting or forecasting, decision-making, and communicating their own ideas.

In a seventh grade class, the teacher evaluates the end of the chapter questions in the science book. She discovers that most of the questions in the chapter on the circulatory system are simple recall. She develops alternate questions which emphasize the higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy such as analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

**Criterion #3** Learning activities provide opportunities for creative thinking (e.g., fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration).

Using old magazines or catalogs, students cut out pictures of as many things as they can find that are orange. All pictures are pasted on a large pumpkin outline. Over the course of the month of October, more pictures are added. Students seek fifty pictures of orange things by Halloween.

When the collage is finished, a face is added. During March, a large shamrock could be filled with pictures of things that are green.

As a special project in a high school science class, the instructor first teaches the creative thinking techniques of SCAMPER. Students look at examples of real inventions (telephone, lightbulbs, etc.) to see if SCAMPER might have been used by the inventors. They then form small groups to use this technique to develop a simple invention, improve an existing product or solve a problem.

**Criterion #4** Learning activities provide opportunities for critical thinking (e.g., inference, deduction, comparison, classification, observation, decision making).

A middle school language arts teacher begins a unit on writing editorials by having students read editorials from the newspaper. Each editorial is carefully analyzed to determine which statements are fact and which are opinion. Students then attempt to write two editorials – one which is totally opinion and one in which the opinions are supported by fact. These are critiqued and discussed by all class members.

A high school teacher asks her class to read a short story. Afterwards, she presents several statements and asks the class to judge whether each is true, false, or uncertain. They discuss what enables them to make these decisions. When a statement is not clearly true or false, she asks whether or not the statement is a reasonable inference, and asks the students to support their view with evidence from the story.

**Criterion #5** Learning activities include opportunities to master and apply systematic problem solving methods.

For a holiday play, one teacher used Creative Problem Solving (CPS) with the class to organize, find or make all the necessary props. In addition CPS was used to organize who would do what to make sure the play props were ready.

Working with the Superintendent, a group of high school students used CPS to redesign completely their school's parking lot and traffic flow system, increasing its efficiency and making the area safer during busy traffic periods.

**Criterion #6** Learning activities recognize and respond to the student's learning style preferences and needs.

All 11<sup>th</sup> grade chemistry teacher offered the students a number of options for providing they understood the concepts presented. Students could give a summary of each chapter's content through oral explanation, take a teacher made written test, submit a written report, drawings and diagrams or conduct a teacher approved, student selected independent project. Students varied their efforts for each chapter.

During math class, students receive both visual and auditory input through use of the overhead projector. In addition, students are allowed to check problems one at a time with someone else or

work in small groups to solve problems they are unsure of. Students who wish to do so, do not have to participate and may work at their seats on the written assignment.

**Criterion #7** Instruction involves many and varied student activities and groupings within the classroom.

During a science unit on oceanography, students worked in several ways based on individual choice. Options included: working in groups of four to develop an underwater living unit; working alone writing a research report; building diagrams or models to show what they have learned. All activities carried certain point values, so students' work can be easily graded/compared.

A third grader has written and produced a puppet show with other third graders, participated in an accelerated reading program, created a game entitled, "Famous Heroines" and participated with a small group of third, fourth and fifth graders in presenting a Friday afternoon "student news" program over the school's public address system.

### **Indicator B: Appropriate Enrichment**

This indicator involves the ways in which a school system or school attempts to provide appropriate enrichment activities. It includes opportunities for students to explore new topics, training opportunities in appropriate process skills such as creative problem solving and research skills, and opportunities for students to independently pursue their individual interests and conduct independent investigations.

**Criterion #1** Students are provided opportunities to explore many topics, extending beyond the regular or prescribed curriculum.

In an elementary school (grades 1-5) all students participate in two sessions (each in six weeks long) of an Activity Period. Students choose from among a wide variety of courses. Parents, faculty and staff offer the courses.

A high school regularly schedules "Seminars" for students. These seminars are conducted by guest speakers from a variety of fields – the arts, academia, business, technology, etc. The seminars are offered during study hall periods as an option for interested students.

**Criterion #2** Students' interests are used as the basis for exploratory activities.

A second grader became fascinated by the moose from Vermont who seemed to be courting Jessica the cow. The teacher allowed the student to research the event which led to a poster with photographs and information about the moose.

The teachers in a middle school conduct a student interest survey each year. The results are tabulated to help determine various topics and types of enrichment to be scheduled for the year. Each grade level plans periodic enrichment opportunities based on the student's interests.

**Criterion #3** Students have opportunities to develop and practice research, inquiry and investigate skills.

In a junior high setting students are required 4-5 times a year to research one aspect of their Social Studies curriculum. As a result of careful guidance and study, students produce essays, biography, collages, or other independently-completed products.

In a third grade class, students learn how to conduct interviews to collect research information. The students practice developing and asking questions and arranging interviews in class with the teacher and each other. A guest is brought into class and interviewed by the students. They compile their information and as a group develop a short article based on the interview for the school newspaper.

**Criterion #4** Students have opportunities, individually or in small groups, to investigate real problems.

In a high school setting, the student council discusses a local problem such as waste removal or a by-pass route and brainstorms possible solutions for such problems. In another high school, the Student Council uses a problem solving approach to redesign the building's after-school club and activities programs.

A group of 4<sup>th</sup> graders worked with the Principal of their school on the problem on noise levels in the school cafeteria. The students implemented the solution which the Principal thought was best (which involved arranging for music to be played during lunch times.)

**Criterion #5** Students have the opportunity to conduct first hand investigations leading to original products.

Kathleen, a third grader became interested in cartooning. After reading several books on the topic and collecting cartoon strips to analyze, she created her own cartoon book with a character named, "Sammy, The Soccer Ball." The character was so popular with her classmates that Kathleen continued to develop stories to share.

A group of sixth graders were concerned about the issue of treatment of research animals in laboratories. They created a six minute film which told the story of a scientist and a white mouse who exchange places in a lab. The film was shown to an audience of adults at a local humane society meeting.

**Criterion #6** Students have opportunities to share their products and accomplishments with appropriate audiences or through appropriate outlets.

In a 1<sup>st</sup> grade classroom, a parent worked with several children to create drawings and models of futuristic buildings. They were displayed in the local library, and received newspaper coverage.

Advanced high school German students wrote a marionette version of the tale "The Princess and the Pea" and performed it in German for an elementary school with an announcer to translate.

**Criterion #7** Students have access to many and varied resources including materials (books, media, technology) and people from within the school or throughout the community.

One junior high enrichment program student who had participated in a veterinary medicine class now travels to a local veterinarian's office once a week to assist the veterinarian in research.

In a junior high setting, members of a media class showed their finished projects on a local cable TV channel. All students who get cable can then view these products in their homes.

### **Indicator C: Effective Acceleration**

This indicator involves insuring that students spend only the amount of time they need to master materials, no more and no less. Through effective acceleration, students can finish regular curriculum early and move on to pursue more advanced materials.

**Criterion #1** Students are placed in appropriate instructional activities based on their actual needs and abilities.

Students in grade six who tested at grade level 12 or higher on a reading test in vocabulary and comprehension participate in a literature class of their own. The emphasis is on literature and Junior Great Books.

Young elementary students who are advanced in math skills meet once a week with a parent who serves as a volunteer math tutor. During these special sessions, the students are involved in simulations which utilize their advanced skills. Simulations have included "Stock Market", "Architectural Design" and other math related areas.

**Criterion #2** Students are encouraged and given opportunities to pursue learning activities at their own pace.

In a third grade classroom, the teacher allows students to work on math at their own pace. She has had several students finish the math book quite independently. Conducting the math program in this way gives the teacher a great deal of flexibility in teaching methods including small group, one on one, peer teaching and large group presentations.

Because of the rapid rate at which some students read and absorb information, the secondary math program enables certain students to move through the curriculum at their own, faster than usual pace. A group of mentors has been located to provide assistance to those students who complete the regular program and need special assistance in more advanced studies.

**Criterion #3** Different individuals and groups of students may be working on varied tasks or activities at any specified time.

A second grade teacher organizes her classroom around several learning centers, and uses learning agreements to manage the activities of individuals and small groups throughout the school day.

In a high school math program, students develop individual contracts to fulfill class requirements. Optional or advanced activities often include a choice of accelerated or advanced learning opportunities, special projects or participation in a math mentorship program.

**Criterion #4** Advanced resources, materials and learning activities are provided or are available to students according to their actual needs and abilities without rigid “grade level locksteps” in the curriculum.

In a high school Algebra I class, several students were allowed to work on their own and to take individual tests when they were ready. Several students went far beyond the regular curriculum.

A fourth grader developed an interest in Sherlock Holmes and detective work. When resources in the elementary school library proved insufficient to satisfy her curiosity, the media specialist arranged to have more advanced reading materials made available through the local high school.

**Criterion #5** Deliberate steps are taken to diagnose or identify accurately the actual instructional levels and needs of students at higher levels of progress or accomplishment.

At the beginning of each school year, fourth grade teachers in a particular school pretest all incoming students using a series of cumulative skills tests they have designed in the areas of math, spelling and reading. Material and skills for which a majority of students show proficiency are eliminated from the curriculum to provide time for acceleration and enrichment activities. Students are retested periodically to ensure that they have mastered all skills areas.

**Criterion #6** Students have opportunities to interact with others who share similar abilities and accomplishments in areas of common interest.

In an enrichment program, students from various grade levels meet and work on activities together. Despite the differences in age, students have much in common and friendships develop across grade levels based on interest and ability.

In a regional high school, students with interest and ability in drama and playwriting have formed a guild. The guild meets on a regular basis under the direction of the secondary drama teacher and members of the community theater group to encourage students to share interests and creative products.

**Criterion #7** Students have an opportunity to participate in challenging courses or instructional activities across grade levels or school units.

A 4<sup>th</sup> grader with exceptional science ability and interests enrolled in, and successfully completed, a high school Earth Science class.

A high school music program has several choral groups which focus on various types of music (show tunes, rock, blues, etc.) Talented students at any grade level may participate in these groups.

## **Indicator D: Independence and Self-Direction**

This indicator has to do with the ways in which we encourage students to be in charge of their own learning. It involves giving them the process tools they need as well as the experiences necessary to become lifelong learners or self-directed learners. It includes the dimensions of decision-making, research skills and evaluation skills.

**Criterion #1** Students have opportunities to establish their own goals and objectives for certain projects and tasks.

An eighth grade class, dissatisfied with their introduction to the junior high, developed a guidebook and a whole “Step-Up Day” which included tours and presentations on junior high options.

In a third grade class, the students set a goal of reading 100,000 minutes. Each month various themes were developed and each student developed an individual reading goal.

**Criterion #2** Students have opportunities to learn and use appropriate methods for locating their own materials and resources.

Students were introduced to the National Geographic Index. Using old piles of National Geographic Magazines, students went on a “scavenger hunt” to track down various authors, articles and resources. This activity was designed to introduce students to the idea of Magazine indexes and was followed up by a trip to the library to use the Reader’s Guide to Periodic Literature.

High school students interested in the study of fossils were instructed by a paleontologist as to how to collect specimens, find resource people and materials to aid in identification and conduct laboratory tests to determine composition, age, etc. The students then employed the methods of professional paleontologists in conducting their own weekend field expedition and follow-up activities.

**Criterion #3** Students have opportunities to work with their peers to establish criteria make decisions and evaluate progress and products.

Third grade students worked to develop a list of criteria for “What makes a good toy?” They then created a toy of their own which was judged by the children.

Barry, a fifth grader interested in whales, wrote a short story about a baby whale’s adventures off the coast of New England as his independent investigation in language arts. Before submitting his story for publication in the student literary magazine, Barry asked several teachers and fellow students to read, critique and correct errors on copies of his story. He used these suggestions to make his final revisions.

**Criterion #4** Students are guided in learning and using appropriate methods for realistic self-evaluation.

In a fifth grade class, students are given the opportunity to evaluate their progress as learners during each grading period. On their own separate report card which will accompany the teacher's evaluation home, students reflect on progress they have made and areas which need improvement. There is also a place for them to make comments on their own educational growth. Parents are required to sign both the teacher's and the student's version of the report card.

A counseling program in a high school has been implemented which is designed to help students learn to set goals and to realistically evaluate themselves and their endeavors.

**Criterion #5** Students are encouraged to apply independent learning skills to plan conduct, evaluate and share individual and small groups projects and products.

When students presented their independent studies to the other members of their class, their peers were supplied with a criterion checklist. Each student filled one for all other students, and also filled one out for him/herself. The checklists were teacher developed the first time, but subsequent activities involved student generated checklists.

Students in a high school independent study class spend the first week of the semester discussing and listing the steps that are involved in completing any independent investigation. Using these student developed guidelines, the students individually create a "management journal" designed to help them select a topic, focus on a problem to be investigated and identify a product and audience. The journals are then typed and reproduced into usable booklets by students in the advanced typing class.

**Criterion #6** Students learn to use contracts, learning agreements and other management or record keeping resources accurately and effectively (in small groups and independently).

An eighth grade math student finished the year's work early but could not enroll in Math 9 due to scheduling conflicts. He developed a list of projects he wanted to accomplish during math time.

**Criterion #7** Students work in an environment which promotes opportunities to learn and apply cooperative group processes and skills.

In a fifth grade class, students are grouped heterogeneously for spelling study groups. Each week, students work together to learn the words for the final Friday test. On Friday, students receive two grades; their own individual score and a "team average" score. The team with the highest average receives a ticket good for a reward the following week.

During a unit on oceanography, students work together in cooperative groups to plan out an underwater living unit. They use Creative Problem Solving to deal with issues of light, food, recreation, power, etc., all based on the premise of living underwater in the ocean.

### **Indicator E: Personal Growth and Social Development**

This indicator has to do with the ways in which the curriculum and the environment foster high levels of self-esteem and a strong sense of the worth of all individuals. Not only should students

feel good about themselves, they should also have respect for and tolerance of individual differences in style ability and temperament.

**Criterion #1** Students have the opportunity and encouragement for the development of a positive self-image.

At the beginning of the school year, students are given the opportunity to create a “ME” badge. This badge shows the students favorite subjects, foods, etc. These badges are worn and then displayed in the room.

The 12<sup>th</sup> grade students in a human development seminar class have been looking at the role of positive self-concept in the development of potential. They are now involved in a class project to find out where information about self comes from. They are to observe and record interactions between teachers and students and students and students to determine the number and type after sharing the results of the activity, students will explore “messages” they have received about themselves and how these messages have affected performance in school and in other areas.

**Criterion #2** Students are encouraged to work individually and cooperatively on challenging tasks to advance both individual and group goals.

Students in a fifth grade class have chosen to produce an animated film about cooperation on the playground. The student’s goal is to enter their film in a local student media festival and to show the film to other students. Initial meetings with students have revealed that they will need to set aside individual differences in order to accomplish this task by the deadline date. The students decided to divide responsibilities based on strengths and interests in order to accomplish their task.

**Criterion #3** Students are encouraged to recognize and accept their own strengths and needs and those of others.

A teacher used bibliotherapy to help students accept and appreciate differences among people. Each student selected a famous creative adult to read about. They discovered characteristics about these people that made them different but also made them special and talented. The activity ended with students discussing their personal differences.

**Criterion #4** Students have opportunities to express, clarify and demonstrate respect for feelings and values.

Students in a ninth grade language arts class are participating in simulation activities in which people with blue eyes do not have the same rights as those with brown eyes (can’t sharpen pencils, must leave class last, can’t sit in the front, etc.) After a thorough discussion of resulting feelings and reactions the students will discuss sources and results of prejudice and select a novel to read which reflects this issue.

**Criterion #5** Students are encouraged to develop and demonstrate positive attitudes towards learning and thinking.

Teachers in a middle school have organized an enrichment program to share their diverse interests and model their love of learning with the students. Once a month, teachers trade classrooms and become “guest presenters.” In these sessions, they conduct a presentation on a topic or hobby of special interest to them and not related to their teaching subject. Presentations have been on meteorology, French, cycling, fencing, horticulture and other diverse topics.

**Criterion #6** Students have opportunities to help and support each other, to learn with and from each other and to work cooperatively on commonly held important goals.

Students in advanced Geometry class formed study groups to help them prepare for tests and exams. Each study group has an initial meeting with the teacher to develop their own expectations, responsibilities and guidelines. Following each exam, the groups discuss ways to improve the effectiveness of their study sessions.

High school students serve as mentors for elementary and middle school students who are involved in an independent investigation. The mentor is matched with a younger student based on a common interest. Seth, a tenth grader, is presently meeting with Allison, a fourth grader, once a week at her elementary school to help her with an astronomy unit. Allison wants to create a planetarium for her school.

**Criterion #7** Students are encouraged to develop confidence in their own ability to think creatively and critically and to solve problems.

During the second semester of the school year, after training students in Creative Problem Solving, one elementary teacher encourages students to problem solve on their own. Issues that come up in the classroom are dealt with through discussion and students are encouraged to come up with solutions of their own which the teacher agrees to abide by, providing the decisions meet certain minimal criteria.

## **Indicator F: Career Perspectives and Future Orientation**

This indicator has to do with preparing children to live in the future. No matter what age they are, students need to be aware of the importance of planning for the future, not only their own, but that of their society. Personally, children need to be aware of the variety of careers that are available to them and the necessary educational steps that must be taken to reach those goals. In addition, it is important that students have an awareness of the ways in which change can be effected so that they feel capable and empowered to help plan the future of our world.

**Criterion #1** Students have the opportunities to consider the nature and consequences of change in our world.

A group of interested sixth graders are investigating environmental changes in their region over the past 200 years. They are comparing information about their region with scientific research reports of global environmental change. Students have discussed these environmental trends and are presently developing possible future scenarios for their community that could come about as a result of these changes.

In an advanced level 11<sup>th</sup> grade science class, students are involved in a combined science/social studies activity focussing on the impact of biomedical technology on 1) the quality of human life and 2) the nature of medical services to individuals. Questions regarding the changing nature of medical ethics are also being examined from a historical perspective.

**Criterion #2** Students have opportunities to predict, assess and investigate various alternative futures and their implications for the future.

In a local community, several high school students help the school board plan for future population growth and changing educational needs. As part of an independent study, they are helping the board by gathering demographic information about their community.

**Criterion #3** Students are encouraged to become aware of many career possibilities.

An eighth grade teacher has her students participate in an activity called “Wildest Dreams.” Students choose a “fantasy career”, rock star, president, CEO, etc. and list all the things they associate with the career. Next they investigate the realities of training, opportunities, benefits and life-styles involved through interviews and research. The activity ends with the students comparing their “stereotype” of the career with its reality.

As part of schoolwide enrichment activities planned each year, guest speakers are invited into third and fourth grade classrooms. These guests represent career areas related to topics being studied. For example, when Pilgrims were the topic at Thanksgiving, an historian came in to talk about his job. When types of rocks were studied in fourth grade science, a state geologist visited the class to discuss her profession.

**Criterion #4** Students are encouraged to consider and appreciate the value of lifelong learning and appreciate the value of lifelong learning and futuristic thinking.

An elementary teacher makes specific references to the courses she is taking, often introducing a new teaching technique by saying, “Here’s something I learned about in a course that I’m taking...” The teacher also mentions other people who are taking courses in order to instill the idea that learning can occur at any age.

In a first grade class, students interview each other to discover things they are learning about and doing outside school. The information is shared on a “Learner’s Bulletin Board” and discussed to encourage all types of learning experiences in class and to encourage diversity of interests.

**Criterion #5** Students have opportunities to investigate the nature, causes and possible solutions for both present and future problems in the community country or world.

In October, students in a fifth grade class learn about UNICEF and the ways it helps children. Issues such as world hunger and third world countries are discussed. At the end of October, the students run the “Trick-or-Treat” for UNICEF campaign. Over the last two years, more than \$3000.00 has been collected and sent to UNICEF. After the totals are announced, an assembly is given detailing all the things that can be achieved through the money they’ve earned.

In a high school independent studies program, tenth graders can participate in volunteer work to partially fulfill academic requirements. Leslie has investigated and reported about hunger in America. She is now involved in helping a community set up a food assistance program for low-income families.

**Criterion #6** Students are encouraged to read and examine many historical views of the future and to compare these views with current trends, events and projections.

During a unit on fantasy novels, top reading students in fifth grade read at least one Jules Verne novel. The students then compare Verne's scientific vision with the current reality. Various discussions are held to try and determine what current themes in science fiction or fantasy might turn out to be true.

Eight grade history students collect information from old newspapers, pamphlets, books, articles pertaining to past "World Fairs" and "World Expositions" (from the 1800's on) to find various opinions on the future of machines and technology. Cite predictions from the 1800's to the mid 1900's are compared with information about the present status of technology. Students chart the accuracy of early predictions.

**Criterion #7** Students have opportunities to observe, interview and analyze experiences and events of the past, present and future from many perspectives.

In a fifth grade, students participate in a three week "news" unit. Using news weeklies, newspapers and radio or TV news, they compare and contrast methods by which the news is presented. Students compile "scrapbooks" about a story they are interested in and follow throughout the unit.

**Acknowledgement.** The examples in this Appendix were shared by a number of classroom teachers, including Susan Tannehill, Patricia McEwen, and many participants in the 1986 and 1987 Governor's Institutes on Gifted Education in New Hampshire, as well as by members of the Center for Creative Learning staff. We express our appreciation to these contributors.